EASTER PROGRAM

Tonight we celebrate Easter. This is a time for

HOPE - for Jesus Christ faced the evil of his time and truth won

CELEBRATION - for Jesus Christ, God's holy ambassador, revealed God's amazing love for everyone

JOY - for Jesus Christ, though crucified, dead and buried, rose from death and lives with us today; and Christ will return one day

PRAISING GOD - for the life of Jesus, the Christ, our Savior

Sing to God a new song!

Praise God's name with dancing!

Praise God with the trumpet sound,

with tambourine

with strings and pipe

LET EVERYTHING THAT BREATHES PRAISE GOD!

☆ SONG: ALL EARTH REJOICE WITH A GLADSOME VOICE

(Change of mood.....light dim? visual? choir position?)

NARRATOR: But there is a dark side to our Easter story. Let us now look back at Jesus of Nazareth, in first-century Israel. As a young man he lived a courageous life commited to the God he called "Abba". He did not accumulate possessions nor wealth. Instead, he lived as an itinerant preacher . He called for justice and mercy, truth and love, repentance from sin and relationship with God the Creator. He healed many people; he taught them; and he underscored the equality of all people before God regardless of gender, race, position or wealth. Though Jesus was well-loved by many people, he was despised by those he criticized--the religious authorities. Eventually, these powerful men found a way to kill him. Their false accusations, mock trial, and tortuous beatings led to Jesus' humiliating crucifixion. Jesus suffered a slow death, nailed to a cross outside Jerusalem city on a hill called "Calvary".

A WIND BLEW OVER CALVARY

WHY DO THEY MOCK YOU, JESUS?

Just Before Jesus died, hanging on the cross, he said, "Abba, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing". Imagine this amazing love and forgiveness in the midst of such agony. Like the soldier who witnessed that day, we believe that "truly he was the son of God".

☆ WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS / Dance + Song

Jesus' mother, Mary, and "John the beloved disciple" wept together at the foot of Jesus' cross. A few of Jesus' heartbroken followers and Joseph of Arimathea sadly buried Jesus' corpse. But, God was there too.

And God cried.

☆ AND GOD CRIED

On the third day after Jesus' death, some women went to the tomb-site. They were greeted by an angel who said, "WHY DO YOU LOOK FOR THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? HE IS NOT HERE, HE HAS RISEN!" (Lk. 24:5-6)

THE LORD IS RISEN

(choir) He is Risen indeed!

THE LORD IS RISEN

(congregation) He is Risen indeed!

THE LORD IS RISEN

all He is Risen indeed!

EASTER HYMN (CONGREGATION AND CHOIR)

(visual? light? choir position?)

God, angels and eye-witnesses declared that Jesus Christ had risen. Through the centuries , Christians have continued to see, experience and overwhelmingly confirm the living presence of Jesus Christ. And today, at Covenant MCC we join our voices with ~~the~~ those from the past to say, "Christ is Risen indeed". In fact, Jesus Christ is with us now. Together we sense Christ's love, joy and hope.

IN THIS VERY ROOM

solo?

God's spirit gives us strength for living today as Jesus lived in the first century:

FAITH in God's love and mercy

COURAGE to stand for truth and justice

FIRE to struggle for the equality of all people

WHOLENESS to foster healing within ourselves and our relationships

RESPECT for individual choice and freedom

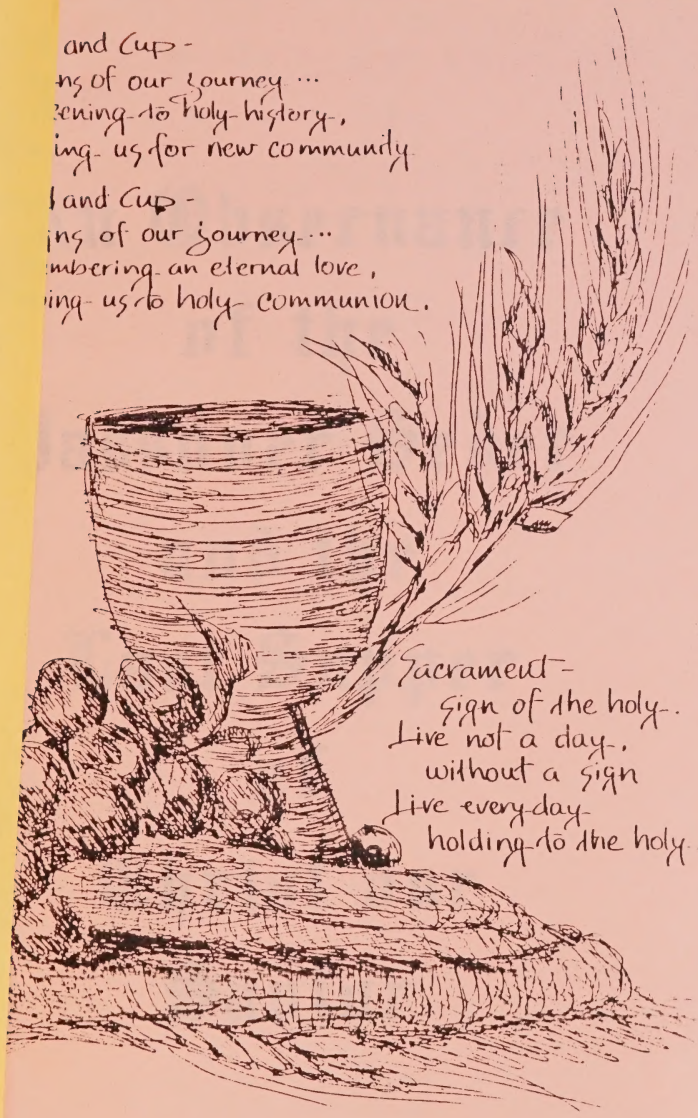
and GRACE to become a child of God.

This is the Christian's Easter story... It is our story. We love to tell it because it is such very, good news!

- ★ I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY
- ★ ALL EARTH REJOICE *(Reprise)*

and Cup -
ns of our journey ...
ening to holy history,
ing us for new community

and Cup -
ns of our journey ...
mbering an eternal love,
ing us to holy communion.



Covenant Metropolitan Community Churc

An Observance of the Passover Seder and the Last Supper of Christ our Savior

The Seder Service

A. BEFORE THE MEAL

CELEBRANT: On the evening of the first day on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Last Supper.

1. LIGHTING THE MENORAH

CELEBRANT: (after lighting the candles) Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast sanctified us by thy Commandments and hast commanded us to kindle the festival lights.
Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season.
May this place be consecrated, O God, by the light of thy countenance, shining upon us in blessing, and bringing us peace!

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: With song and praise, and with the symbols of our feast, let us renew the memories of our past.
Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast chosen us from all peoples and exalted and sanctified us with thy Commandments. In love hast thou given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy and festive seasons of gladness, even this day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a holy convocation unto us, a memorial of the departure from Egypt. Thou hast chosen us for thy service and hast made us sharers in the blessings of holy festivals. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who sanctifiest Israel and the festive seasons.

PEOPLE: PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE WORLD, WHO HAST CREATED THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

CELEBRANT POURS THE FIRST CUP OF WINE. ALL DRINK.

2. CELEBRANT: (lifting up a sprig of parsley) The parsley reminds us of new spring growth and is a token of gratitude to God for the products of the earth. We dip it in the salt water to remind us of the tears of all Hebrew mothers who have had their children taken from them.

ALL IN UNISON: PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, CREATOR OF THE FRUIT OF THE EARTH.
(All dip the parsley into salt water and eat)

CELEBRANT: (breaks off half of the middle Matzo and conceals it in a separate napkin, then lifts the plate containing the rest of the Matzos) Lo! This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come and celebrate the Passover with us. May it be God's will to redeem us from all trouble and from all servitude.
(replace plate upon the table)

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

THE YOUNGEST PERSON AT THE TABLE ASKS:

1. Why is tonight different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread. why, on this night, do we eat only unleavened?

2. On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs.. Why, on this night, do we eat especially bitter herbs?

3. On all other nights, we do not dip herbs in any condiment. Why, on this night, do we dip them in salt water and haroses?

4. On all other nights, we eat without special festivities. Why, on this night, do we hold this Seder Service?

CELEBRANT: We celebrate this night because we were Phroah's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord our God delivered us with a mighty hand. Had not the Holy One, blessed be God, redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, we, our children, and our children's children would have remained slaves. Therefore, even if all of us were wise and well versed in the Torah, it would still be our duty from year to year to tell the story of the deliverance from Egypt.

THE STORY OF THE OPPRESSION

CELEBRANT: The Torah tells us that when our ancestor Jacob was a homeless wanderer, he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number. All the souls of his household were threescore and ten. And Joseph was already in Egypt; he was the governor over the land. And Joseph placed his father and his family, and gave them a possession, as Pharoah had commanded. And Israel dwelt in the land of Goshen, and they got them possessions therein, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.

And Joseph died, and all his kin and all that generation. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people: "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there befalleth any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land." Therefore they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with burdens, And they built for Pharoah store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more the Egyptians

afflicted them, the more the Israelites multiplied and the more they spread abroad.

And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us cruel bondage. And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and with wonders. God sent before us Moses and Aaron and Miriam. And God brought forth God's people with joy, God's chosen ones with singing. And God guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd guides a flock.

Therefore God commanded us to observe the Passover in its season, from year to year, that God's law shall be in our mouths, and that we shall declare God's might unto our children, God's salvation to all generations.

ALL IN UNISON: **WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE, O LORD, AMONG THE MIGHTY?**
WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE, GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS,
FEARFUL IN PRAISES, DOING WONDERS?
THE LORD SHALL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER.

HOW MUCH MORE THEN ARE WE TO BE GRATEFUL UNTO THE LORD FOR THE MANIFOLD FAVORS WHICH GOD HAS BESTOWED UPON US! GOD BROUGHT US OUT OF EGYPT, DIVIDED THE RED SEA FOR US, PERMITTED US TO CROSS ON DRY LAND, SUSTAINED US FOR FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT, FED US WITH MANNA, ORDAINED THE SABBATH, BROUGHT US TO MOUNT SINAI, GAVE US THE TORAH, LED US INTO THE LAND OF ISRAEL, BUILT FOR US THE TEMPLE, SENT US PROPHETS OF TRUTH, AND MADE US A HOLY PEOPLE TO PERFECT THE WORLD UNDER THE REALM OF THE ALMIGHTY, IN TRUTH AND IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE PASSOVER SYMBOLS

PESAH

ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS ASKS: What is the meaning of Pesah?

CELEBRANT: (holding up the roasted shank-bone) Pesah means PASCHAL LAMB and is symbolized by the shank-bone. It is written, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's PASSOVER, for that God PASSED OVER the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when God smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." As God in the ancient "Watch-Night" passed over and spared the houses of Israel, so did God save us in all kinds of distress, and so may God always shield

the afflicted, and forever remove every trace of bondage from among the children of humanity.

MATZO

ANOTHER PARTICIPANT ASKS: What is the meaning of the Matzo?

CELEBRANT: (lifting up the Matzo) Matzo, called THE BREAD OF THE AFFLICTION, was the hasty provision that our ancestors made for their journey, as it is said, "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt. There was not sufficient time to leaven it, for they were driven out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any provisions." The bread which of necessity they baked unleavened, thus became a symbol of divine help.

MOROR

ANOTHER PARTICIPANT ASKS: And what is the meaning of Moror?

CELEBRANT: (lifting up the bitter herbs) Moror means BITTER HERB. We eat it in order to recall that the lives of our ancestors were embittered by the Egyptians , as we read; "And they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and in all manner of field labor. Whatever task was imposed upon them, was executed with the utmost rigor." As we eat in the midst of the festivities of this night, we rejoice in the heroic spirit which trials developed in our people. Instead of becoming embittered by them, they were sustained and strengthened.

THE WATCH-NIGHT OF THE ETERNAL

CELEBRANT: Because God, "the Guardian of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps" revealed God's self on that "WATCH-NIGHT IN EGYPT" and in all dark periods of our past, as the Redeemer of the enslaved, we keep this as a WATCH-NIGHT FOR ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, dedicated to God our Redeemer.

While enjoying the liberty of this land, let us strive to make secure also our spiritual freedom, that, as the delivered, we may become the deliverer, , carrying out our historic task of being the messenger of religion unto all humankind.

ALL IN UNISON: SO IT IS OUR DUTY TO THANK, PRAISE, AND GLORIFY GOD, WHO BROUGHT US AND OUR ANCESTORS FROM SLAVERY INTO FREEDOM, FROM SORROW INTO JOY, FROM MOURNING UNTO FESTIVE GLADNESS, FROM DARKNESS UNTO LIGHT. LET US THEREFORE PROCLAIM GOD'S PRAISE.

BLESSINGS

CELEBRANT: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hast redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt, and hast enabled us to observe this night of the Passover, the feast of Unleavened Bread. O Lord our God and God of our ancestors, may we, with thy help, live to celebrate other feasts and holy seasons.

May we rejoice in thy salvation and be gladdened by thy righteousness. Grant deliverance to humankind through us, thy people. May thy will be done so that all peoples be moved to worship thee with one accord. And we shall sing new songs of praise unto thee, for our redemption and for the deliverance of our souls. Praised art thou, O God our Redeemer.

THE CUPS ARE FILLED THE SECOND TIME

ALL IN UNISON: PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST CREATED THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

ALL DRINK THE SECOND CUP OF WINE

5. CELEBRANT BREAKS THE UPPER MATZO AND DISTRIBUTES IT.

ALL IN UNISON: PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO BRINGEST FORTH BREAD FROM THE EARTH.

PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST SANCTIFIED US THROUGH THY COMMANDMENTS, AND ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD EAT UNLEAVENED BREAD.

ALL EAT OF THE MATZO

6. EACH PERSON TAKES TWO PIECES OF MATZO AND PLACES BETWEEN THEM SOME OF THE MOROR (horseradish) AND HAROSES (the mortar-like mixture of apples, raisins, and nuts).

CELEBRANT: This was the practice of Hillel, at the time the Temple was still in existence. He combined the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs and ate them together, to carry out the injunction concerning the Passover sacrifice: "With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat."

ALL IN UNISON: PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST SANCTIFIED US BY THY COMMANDMENTS, AND ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD EAT BITTER HERBS.

EACH PERSON PLACES THE MATZO AND MOROR, HALF A ROASTED EGG, A PORTION OF THE LAMB AND OTHER FOODS OF THE FEAST. ALL EAT THE MEAL.

7.CELEBRANT:(as all are completing the supper) The Gospel of John, the 13th chapter tells us that during the meal Jesus stood up and took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. Then he poured water into a bowl and began to wash the feet of his disciples. He dried them with the towel. Perhaps footwashing should be recognized as a sacrament along with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Jesus commanded his disciples with this act to do to others as he had done to them. This is an act that shows true love and caring for one another. Loving parents may wash their children's ears, feet, and bottoms. Their ministry is of the humblest kind but it does not diminish their stature. Authority and loving service belong together. This was Jesus' message when he washed the disciples feet. It meant that BECAUSE he was their teacher and Master, he was also their servant. So we must be servants who bring the message of Jesus Christ to others.

We are about to enact this ritual. I will start by asking one of you to come forward and be seated next to me and I will wash one of your feet. In the same way, I ask whoever is the first to wash the foot of the next and so on. No one will be asked to participate who does not wish to, and no one will think the less of you if you choose not to do this. We are simply OFFERING this ritual in observance of Jesus' last evening with his disciples to show our willingness to be true servants to others in Jesus' name. But no one should be embarrassed by this any more than by observing Communion. We are only following the example of our Savior.

ALL WHO WISH JOIN IN THE WASHING OF FEET.

CELEBRANT: Hear the Gospel of John, chapter 13, verses 12-17, (CELEBRANT READS THIS PASSAGE)

Hear the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, verses 18-21. (CELEBRANT READS THIS PASSAGE)

8. CELEBRANT: (at the conclusion of the footwashing) When the Matzo was blessed in the early part of this Seder, you saw me take a portion of it and conceal it in a napkin. (Lifts up the APHIKOMON) this is called the APHIKOMON and is saved until the end of the meal to be broken and served to each participant. After partaking of the APHIKOMON it is customary to eat nothing else. So, at the end of the meal, Jesus took this portion of unleavened bread and used it in a special way. Hear the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, verses 22-26. (CELEBRANT READS THIS PASSAGE)

And so we join our hearts in Holy Communion with our Lord and Savior. I am going to break the bread and pass it to you. Each of you who wish, break off a piece of it and hold it until the bowl is passed to you which contains the fruit of the vine. Then dip your bread and we will all eat together.

CELEBRANT HOLDS UP THE BREAD, BREAKS IT, KEEPS ONE PIECE, AND PASSES IT TO EACH SIDE OF THE TABLE.

CELEBRANT: The body of Jesus broken for you. All of you, take and eat.

CELEBRANT HOLDS UP THE CUP OF ELIJAH.

CELEBRANT: This is the cup which was reserved for Elijah. It was most likely this cup which Jesus lifted up at the end of the meal and gave to his disciples.

CELEBRANT POURS WINE INTO A BOWL.

CELEBRANT: The blood of Christ shed for you.

CELEBRANT DIPS HIS/HER OWN BREAD INTO THE BOWL AND PASSES THE BOWL DOWN THE CENTER OF THE TABLE ALLOWING EACH PARTICIPANT TO DIP THEIR BREAD.

CELEBRANT: (holding up bread dipped in wine) Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

B. AFTER THE MEAL

CELEBRANT: Let us say grace.

PEOPLE: LET US BLESS GOD OF WHOSE BOUNTY WE HAVE PARTAKEN AND THROUGH WHOSE GOODNESS WE LIVE.

CELEBRANT: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who sustainest the world with goodness, with grace, and with infinite mercy. Thou givest food unto every creature, for thy mercy endureth forever.

PEOPLE: THROUGH THY GOODNESS, FOOD HAS NOT FAILED US. MAY IT NEVER FAIL US AT ANY TIME, FOR THE SAKE OF THY GREAT NAME.

CELEBRANT: Thou sustainest and dealeth graciously with all thy creatures.

PEOPLE: PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD, WHO GIVEST FOOD UNTO ALL.

ALL IN UNISON: O GOD, OUR CREATOR, SUSTAIN AND PROTECT US AND GRANT US STRENGTH TO BEAR BURDENS. LET US NOT, O GOD, BECOME DEPENDENT UPON OTHER PEOPLE, BUT LET US RATHER DEPEND UPON THY HAND, WHICH IS EVER OPEN AND GRACIOUS, SO THAT WE MAY NEVER BE PUT TO SHAME.

CELEBRANT: Our God, and God of our ancestors, be thou ever mindful of us, as thou hast been of our ancestors, so that we may find enlargement, grace, mercy, life, and peace on this Feast of Unleavened Bread.

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: Remember us this day in kindness.

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: Visit us this day with blessing.

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: Preserve us this day for life.

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: With thy saving and gracious word have mercy upon us and save us, for unto thee, the compassionate and merciful One, our eyes are ever turned. The All-merciful! May God, sustain us forever!

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: The All-merciful! May God sustain us in honor!

PEOPLE: AMEN.

CELEBRANT: The All-merciful! May God bless this household and all assembled here. May we find favor in the eyes of God!

PEOPLE: AMEN.

ALL IN UNISON: GOD WILL GIVE STRENGTH TO GOD'S PEOPLE;
GOD WILL BLESS GOD'S PEOPLE WITH PEACE.

THE THIRD CUP OF WINE IS POURED.

ALL IN UNISON: BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATED THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

ALL DRINK THE THIRD CUP.

10. THE FINAL BENEDICTION. THE CUPS ARE FILLED THE FOURTH TIME.

CELEBRANT: (holding up his/her cup) The festive service is completed. With praise we have lifted up the cups symbolizing the divine promises of salvation, and we have called upon the name of God. As we offer the benediction over the fourth cup, let us again lift our souls to God in faith and hope. May God, who broke Pharoah's yoke, forever shatter all fetters of oppression, and hasten the day when swords shall, at last, be broken and wars ended.

ALL IN UNISON: (holding up cups) **MAY GOD BLESS US WITH FREEDOM AND KEEP US FROM DANGER EVERYWHERE. MAY GOD CAUSE THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE TO SHINE UPON ALL PEOPLE, AND DISPEL THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE. MAY GOD BE GRACIOUS UNTO US. AMEN.**

MAY GOD LIFT UP GOD'S COUNTENANCE UPON OUR COUNTRY AND RENDER IT THE TRUE HOME OF LIBERTY AND A BULWARK OF JUSTICE. AND MAY GOD GRANT PEACE UNTO US AND TO ALL HUMANKIND. AMEN.

PRAISED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATEST THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

ALL DRINK THE FOURTH CUP.

CELEBRANT: Tonight we have celebrated the Passover in much the same way Jesus did with his disciples on the night of the Last Supper. I charge you to remember this night and the fulfillment of God's promise of deliverance, not only from bondage as the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, but also from sin and death through Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Savior.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus and his disciples had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Let us sing one verse of "Blest Be The Tie".

ALL RISE AND SING (preferably holding hands in a circle around the table)

CELEBRANT: As you go from this place, I charge you, as Jesus did his disciples, to "watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation."

Will you pray with me?

CLOSING PRAYER

CELEBRANT: Go in peace.

REMAINING EVENTS OF THIS HOLY SEASON

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

7:00 PM
The Stations of the Cross
The Veneration of the Cross
Drama: The Hiding Place

EASTER SUNDAY

6:00 AM
SUNRISE SERVICE AT EAST LAKE PARK

7:30 AM
BREAKFAST AT THE CHURCH

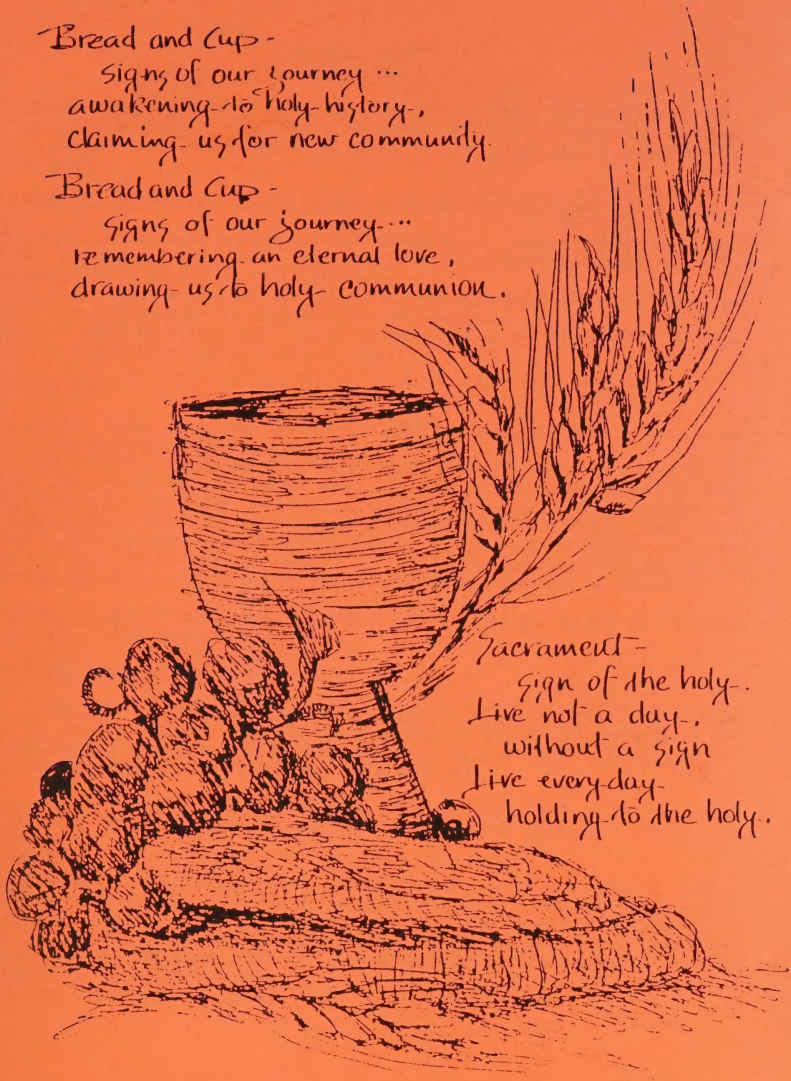
9:45 AM
SUNDAY SCHOOL

11:00 AM
MORNING WORSHIP

7:00PM
EVENING WORSHIP
featuring
"The Seven Last Words of Christ"
presented by the
CMCC CHOIR

Bread and Cup -
signs of our journey ...
awakening to holy history,
claiming us for new community.

Bread and Cup -
signs of our journey ...
remembering an eternal love,
drawing us to holy communion.



Sacrament -
sign of the holy.
Live not a day,
without a sign
Live every day
holding to the holy.

mcc

Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

THE SEDER SERVICE
A. Before the Meal

CELEBRANT: On the evening of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus gathered with His disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. So tonight, we come to this place recall the events of that night and to celebrate the Last Supper.

1. LIGHTING THE FESTIVAL LIGHTS (a Menorah should be used if at all possible.

CELEBRANT: (after lighting the candles) Praised art thou, O Lord, our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast sanctified us by thy Commandments and hast commanded us to kindle the festival lights.
Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season.
May this place be consecrated, O God, by the light of thy countenance, shining upon us in blessing, and bringing us peace!

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: With song and praise, and with the symbols of our feast, let us renew the memories of our past.
Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast chosen us from all peoples and exalted and sanctified us with thy Commandments. In love hast thou given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy and festive seasons of gladness, even this day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a holy convocation unto us, a memorial of the departure from Egypt. Thou hast chosen us for thy service and hast made us sharers in the blessings of thy holy festivals. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who sanctifiest Israel and the festive seasons.

PEOPLE: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine.

CELEBRANT POURS THE FIRST CUP OF WINE. ALL DRINK.

2. CELEBRANT: (lifting up a sprig of parsley) The parsley reminds us of new spring growth and is a token of gratitude to God for the products of the earth. We dip it in the salt water to remind us of the tears of all Hebrew mothers who have had their children taken from them.

ALL IN UNISON: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the earth. (ALL DIP THE PARSLEY INTO SALT WATER AND EAT)

3. CELEBRANT: (breaks off half of the middle Matzo and conceals it in a separate napkin, then lifts the plate containing the rest of the Matzos) Lo! This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come and celebrate the Passover with us. May it be God's will to redeem us from all trouble and from all servitude.
(Replace plate upon the table)

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

THE YOUNGEST PERSON AT THE TABLE ASKS:
1. Why is tonight different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread. Why, on this night, do we eat only unleavened bread?
2. On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs. Why, on this night, do we eat especially bitter herbs?
3. On all other nights, we do not dip herbs in any condiment. Why, on this night, do we dip them in salt water and haroses?
4. On all other nights, we eat without special festivities. Why, on this night, do we hold this Seder service?

CELEBRANT: We celebrate this night because we were Pharoah's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord our God delivered us with a mighty hand. Had not the Holy One, blessed be God, redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, we, our children, and our children's children would have remained slaves. Therefore even if all of us were wise and well versed in the Torah, it would still be our duty from year to year to tell the story of the deliverance from Egypt.

THE STORY OF THE OPPRESSION

CELEBRANT: The Torah tells us that when our ancestor Jacob was a homeless wanderer, he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number. All the souls of his household were threescore and ten. And Joseph was already in Egypt; he was the governor over the land. And Joseph placed his father and his family, and gave them a possession, as Pharoah had commanded. And Israel dwelt in the land of Goshen ; and they got them possessions therein, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.

And Joseph died, and all his kin and all that generation. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people: "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there befalleth us any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land". Therefore they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with burdens. And they built for Pharoah store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more the Israelites multiplied and the more they spread abroad.

And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us cruel bondage. And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and with wonders. God sent before us Moses and Aaron and Miriam. And God brought forth God's people with joy, God's chosen ones with singing. And God guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd guides a flock.

Therefore God commanded us to observe the Passover in its season, from year to year, that God's law shall be in our mouths, and that we shall declare God's might unto our children, God's salvation to all generations.

ALL IN UNISON: Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the mighty?
Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

How much more then are we to be grateful unto the Lord for the manifold favors which God has bestowed upon us! God brought us our of Egypt, divided the Red Sea for us, permitted us to cross on dry land, sustained us for forty years in the desert, fed us with manna, ordained the Sabbath, brought us to Mount Sinai, gave us the Torah, led us into the land of Israel, built for us the Temple, sent unto us prophets of truth, and made us a holy people to perfect the world under the Realm of the Almighty, in truth and in righteousness.

THE PASSOVER SYMBOLS

PESAH

ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS ASKS: What is the meaning of Pesah?

CELEBRANT: (holding up the roasted shank-bone) Pesah means PASCHAL LAMB and is symbolized by the shank-bone. It is written, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's PASSOVER, for that God PASSED OVER the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when God smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses". As God in the ancient "Watch-Night" passed over and spared the houses of Israel, so did God save us in all kinds of distress, and so may God always shield the afflicted, and for ever remove every trace of bondage from among the children of humanity.

MATZO

ANOTHER PARTICIPANT ASKS: What is the meaning of the Matzo?

CELEBRANT: (lifting up the Matzo) Matzo, called THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION, was the hasty provision that our ancestors made for their journey, as it is said, "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt. There was not sufficient time to leaven it, for they were driven out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves sny provisions." The bread which of necessity they baked unleavened, thus became a symbol of divine help.

MOROR

ANOTHER PARTICIPANT ASKS: And what is the meaning of Moror?

CELEBRANT (lifting up the bitter herbs) Moror means BITTER HERB. We eat it in order to recall that the lives of our ancestors were embittered by the Egyptians, as we read: "And they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and in all manner of field labor. Whatever task was imposed upon them, was executed with the utmost rigor". As we eat it in the midst of the festivities of this night, we rejoice in the heroic spirit which trials developed in our people. Instead of becoming embittered by them, they were sustained and strengthened.

THE WATCH-NIGHT OF THE ETERNAL

CELEBRANT: Because God, "the Guardian of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps" revealed God's self on that "WATCH-NIGHT IN EGYPT" and in all dark periods of our past, as the Redeemer of the enslaved, we keep this as a WATCH-NIGHT FOR ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, dedicated to God our Redeemer.

While enjoying the liberty of this land, let us strive to make secure also our spiritual freedom, that, as the delivered, we may become the deliverer, carrying out our historic task of being the messenger of religion unto all humankind.

ALL IN UNISON: So it is our duty to thank, praise, and glorify God, who brought us and our Ancestors from slavery into freedom, from sorrow unto joy, from mourning unto festive gladness, from darkness unto light. Let us therefore proclaim God's praise.

BLESSINGS

CELEBRANT: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt, and hast enabled us to observe this night of the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. O Lord our God and God of our ancestors, may we, with thy help, live to celebrate other feasts and holy seasons.
May we rejoice in thy salvation and be gladdened by thy righteousness. Grant deliverance to humankind through us, thy people. May thy will be done so that thy name shall be sanctified in the midst of all the earth, and that all peoples be moved to worship thee with one accord. And we shall sing new songs of praise unto thee, for our redemption and for the deliverance of our souls. Praised art thou, O God our Redeemer.

THE CUPS ARE FILLED THE SECOND TIME

ALL IN UNISON: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine.

ALL DRINK THE SECOND CUP OF WINE

5.CELEBRANT BREAKS THE UPPER MATZO AND DISTRIBUTES IT.

ALL IN UNISON: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth.
Praised are thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast sanctified us through thy commandments, and ordained that we should eat unleavened bread.

ALL EAT OF THE MATZO.

6. EACH PERSON TAKES TWO PIECES OF MATZO AND PLACES BETWEEN THEM SOME OF THE MOROR (horseradish) AND HAROSES (the mortar-like mixture of apples, raisins and nuts).

CELEBRANT: This was the practice of Hillel, at the time the Temple was still in existence. He combined the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs and ate them together, to carry out the injunction concerning the Passover sacrifice: "With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs, they shall eat."

ALL IN UNISON: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments, and ordained that we should eat bitter herbs.

EACH PERSON PLACES THE MATZO AND MOROR ONTO HIS/HER PLATE AND TAKES A PORTION OF THE LAMB AND A ROASTED EGG. ALL EAT THE MEAL.

7. CELEBRANT: (as all are completing the supper) The Gospel of John, the 13th chapter tells us that during the meal Jesus stood up and took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. Then he poured water into a bowl and began to wash the feet of his disciples. He dried them with the towel. Perhaps footwashing should be recognized as a sacrament along with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Jesus commanded his disciples with this act to do to others as he had done to them. This is an act that shows true love and caring for one another. Loving parents may wash their children's ears, feet, and bottoms. Their ministry is of the humblest kind but is does not diminish their stature. Authority and loving service belong together. This was Jesus' message when he washed the disciples' feet. It meant that BECAUSE he was their teacher and Master, he was also their servant. So we must be servants who bring the message of Jesus Christ to others.

We are about to enact this ritual. I will start by one of you to come forward and be seated next to me and I will wash one of your feet. In the same way, I ask whoever is the first to wash the foot of the next and so on. No one will be asked to participate who does not want to, and no one will think the less of you if you choose not to do this. We are simply OFFERING this ritual in observance of Jesus' last evening with his disciples to show our willingness to be true servants to others in Jesus' name. But no one should be embarrassed by this any more than by observing Communion. We are only following the example of our Savior.

ALL WHO WISH JOIN IN THE WASHING OF FEET.

CELEBRANT: Hear the Gospel of John, chapter 15, verses 12-17. (CELEBRANT READS THIS PASSAGE)

Hear the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, verses 18-21. (CELEBRANT READS THIS PASSAGE)

8. CELEBRANT: (at the conclusion of the footwashing) When the Matzo was blessed in the early part of this Seder, you saw me take a portion of it and conceal it in a napkin. (Lifts up the APHIKOMON) this is called the APHIKOMON and is saved until the end of the meal to be broken and served to each participant. After partaking of the APHIKOMON it is customary to eat nothing else. So, at the end of the meal, Jesus took this portion of unleavened bread and used it in a special way. Hear the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, verses 22-26. (CELEBRANT READS THIS PASSAGE)

And so we join our hearts in Holy Communion with our Lord and Savior. I am going to break the bread and pass it to you. Each of you who wish, break off a piece of it and hold it until the bowl is passed to you which contains the fruit of the vine. Then dip your bread and we will all eat together.

CELEBRANT HOLDS UP THE BREAD, BREAKS IT, KEEPS ONE PIECE, AND PASSES IT TO EACH SIDE OF THE TABLE.

CELEBRANT: The body of Jesus broken for you. All of you, take and eat.

CELEBRANT HOLDS UP THE CUP OF ISAIAH.

CELEBRANT: This is the cup which was reserved for Isaiah. It was this cup which Jesus lifted up at the end of the meal and gave to his disciples.

CELEBRANT POURS WINE INTO A BOWL.

CELEBRANT: The blood of Jesus shed for you.

CELEBRANT DIPS HIS/HER OWN BREAD INTO THE BOWL AND PASSES THE BOWL DOWN THE CENTER OF THE TABLE ALLOWING EACH PARTICIPANT TO DIP THEIR BREAD.

CELEBRANT: (holding up bread dipped in wine) Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

B. AFTER THE MEAL

9. CELEBRANT: Let us say grace.

PEOPLE: Let us bless God of whose bounty we have partaken and through whose goodness we live.

CELEBRANT: Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who sustainest the world with goodness, with grace, and with infinite mercy. Thou givest food unto every creature, for thy mercy endureth forever.

PEOPLE: Through thy great goodness, food has not failed us. May it never fail us at any time, for the sake of thy great name.

CELEBRANT: Thou sustainest and dealeth graciously with all thy creatures.

PEOPLE: Praised art thou, O Lord, who givest food unto all.

ALL IN UNISON: O God, our Creator, sustain and protect us and grant us strength to bear our burdens. Let us not, O God, become dependent upon other people, but let us rather depend upon thy hand, which is ever open and gracious, so that we may never be put to shame.

CELEBRANT: Our God, and God of our Ancestors, be thou ever mindful of us, as thou hast been of our ancestors, so that we may find enlargement, grace, mercy, life, and peace on this Feast of Unleavened Bread.

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: Remember us this day in kindness.

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: Visit us this day with blessing.

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: Preserve us this day for life.

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: With thy saving and gracious word have mercy upon us and save us, for unto thee, the compassionate and merciful One, our eyes are ever turned, for thou art a gracious and merciful Sovereign.
The All- merciful! May God reign over us forever!

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: The All-merciful! May God sustain us in honor!

PEOPLE: Amen.

CELEBRANT: The All-merciful! May God bless this household and all assembled here. May we find favor in the eyes of God humanity!

PEOPLE: Amen.

ALL IN UNISON: God will give strength to God's people;
God will bless God's people with peace.

THE THIRD CUP OF WINE IS POURED.

ALL IN UNISON: Blessed srt thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

ALL DRINK THE THIRD CUP.

10. THE FINAL BENEDICTION. THE CUPS ARE FILLED FOR THE FOURTH TIME.

CELEBRANT: (holding up his/her cup) The festive service is completed. With praise we have lifted up the cups symbolizing the divine promises of salvation, and we have called upon the name of God. As we offer the benediction over the fourth cup, let us again lift our souls to God in faith and hope. May God, who broke Pharoah's yoke, forever shatter all fetters of oppression, and hasten the day when swords shall, at last, be broken and wars ended.

ALL IN UNISON: (holding up cups) May God bless us with freedom and keep us from danger everywhere. May God cause the light of God's countenance to shine upon all people, and dispel the darkness of ignorance and prejudice. May God be gracious unto us. Amen.

May God lift up God's countenance upon our country and render it the true home of liberty and a bulwark of justice. And may God grant peace unto us ant to all humankind. Amen.

Praised art thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine.

ALL DRINK THE FOURTH CUP.

CELEBRANT: Tonight we have celebrated the Passover in much the same way Jesus did with his disciples on the night of the Last Supper. I charge you to remember this night and the fulfillment of God's promise of deliverance, not only from bondage as the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, but also from sin and death through Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Savior.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus and his disciples had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Let us sing one verse of "Blest Be The Tie".

ALL RISE AND SING (preferably holding hands in a circle around the table)

CELEBRANT: As you go from this place, I charge you as Jesus did His disciples to "watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation."

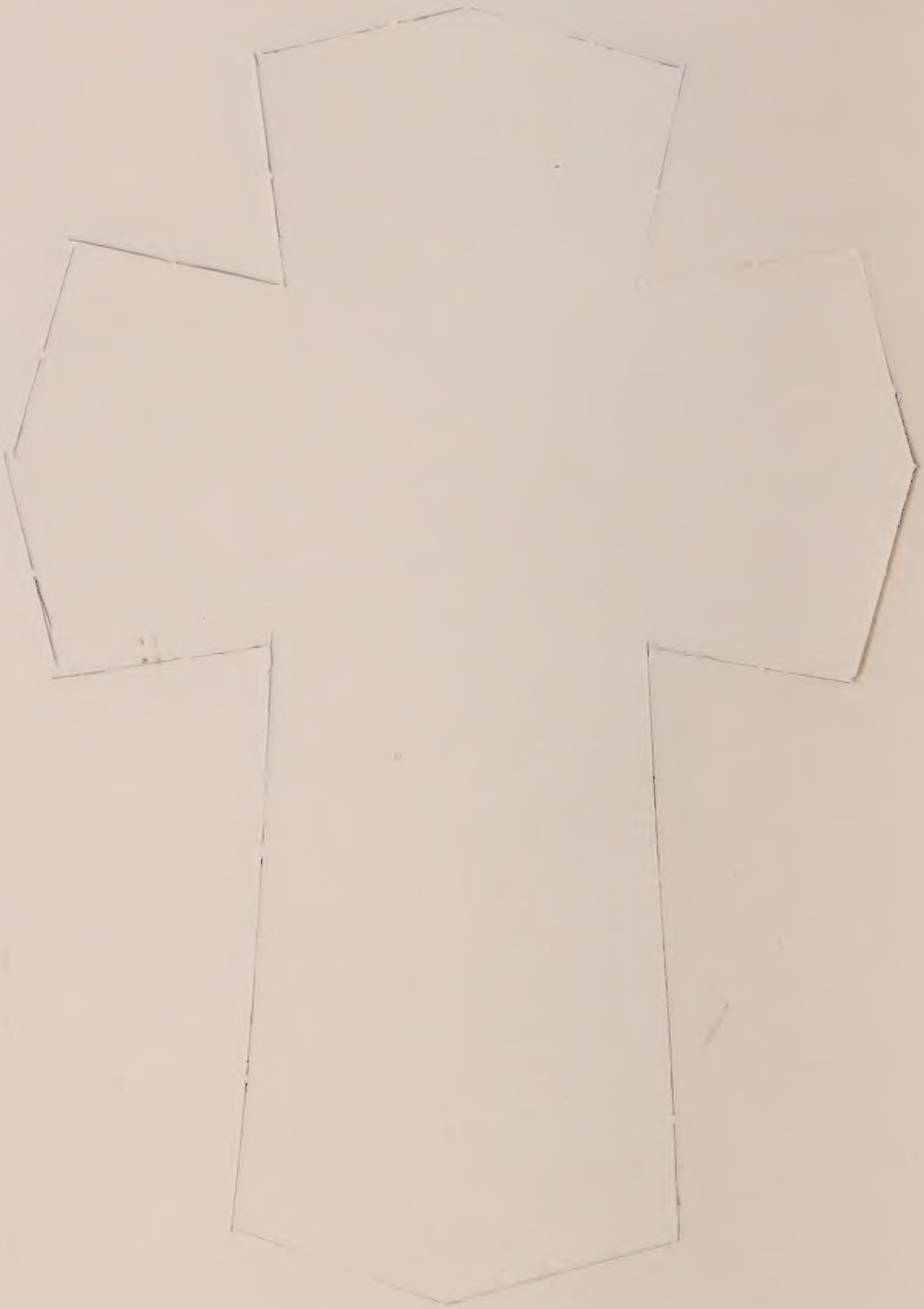
Shall we pray...

CLOSING PRAYER

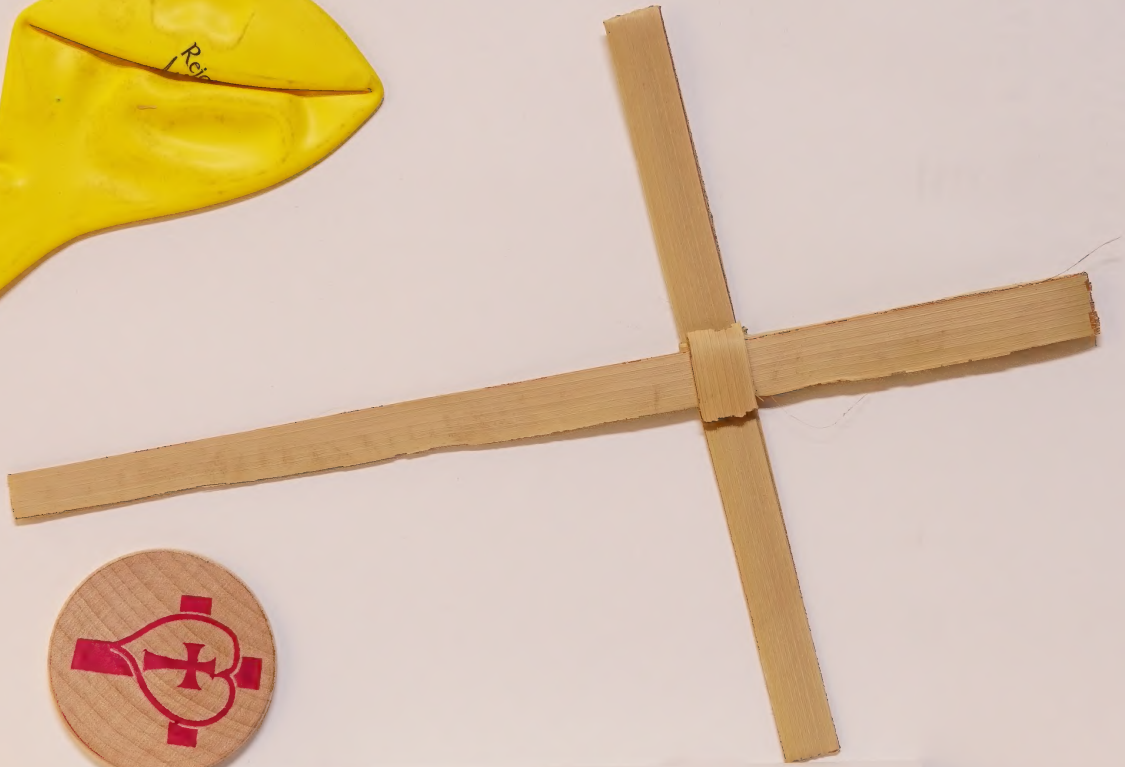
CELEBRANT: Go in peace.

Please press along the perforated edges to remove the **Easter Cross.**

©Copyright 1993 by **Creative Communications for the Parish**. Photo by Harold Rau. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. **EC-9**



THE CROSS IN MY POCKET
I
carry this
cross in my pocket
to remind me of who
I can be, if I take up
my cross and follow
where ever my Savior
leads me.



Savior I · FOLLOW · ON

a children's prayer book for lent

ARDEN MEAD

Jesus' Birth

Jesus Christ, you are the very Son of God. No one is greater than you!

So what did it feel like to be born a human baby? It must have been humiliating. You must love us very much to make that kind of sacrifice!

And now the season of Lent urges God's children to be humble too. Ashes remind us of that, and so does "giving something up."

All of this will really mean something if it helps me think about **you**. Since you became a child for me, help me take up my cross each day with childlike faith and follow where you lead. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... humbly.

Simeon and Anna

When you were just a tiny baby, Jesus Christ, Mary and Joseph brought you to God's house, and two people there were very happy to see you. Simeon and Anna were almost like a grandpa and grandma, they got so excited over you. They gave thanks to God and then talked about what a wonderful future you would have. Grandparents are like that sometimes.

You **did** have a wonderful future before you, Jesus Christ—for you had been born to be the Savior of the world. Because you grew up to be everything you could be, I now have a wonderful future in front of me! Lead me through every stage and every age. Amen.

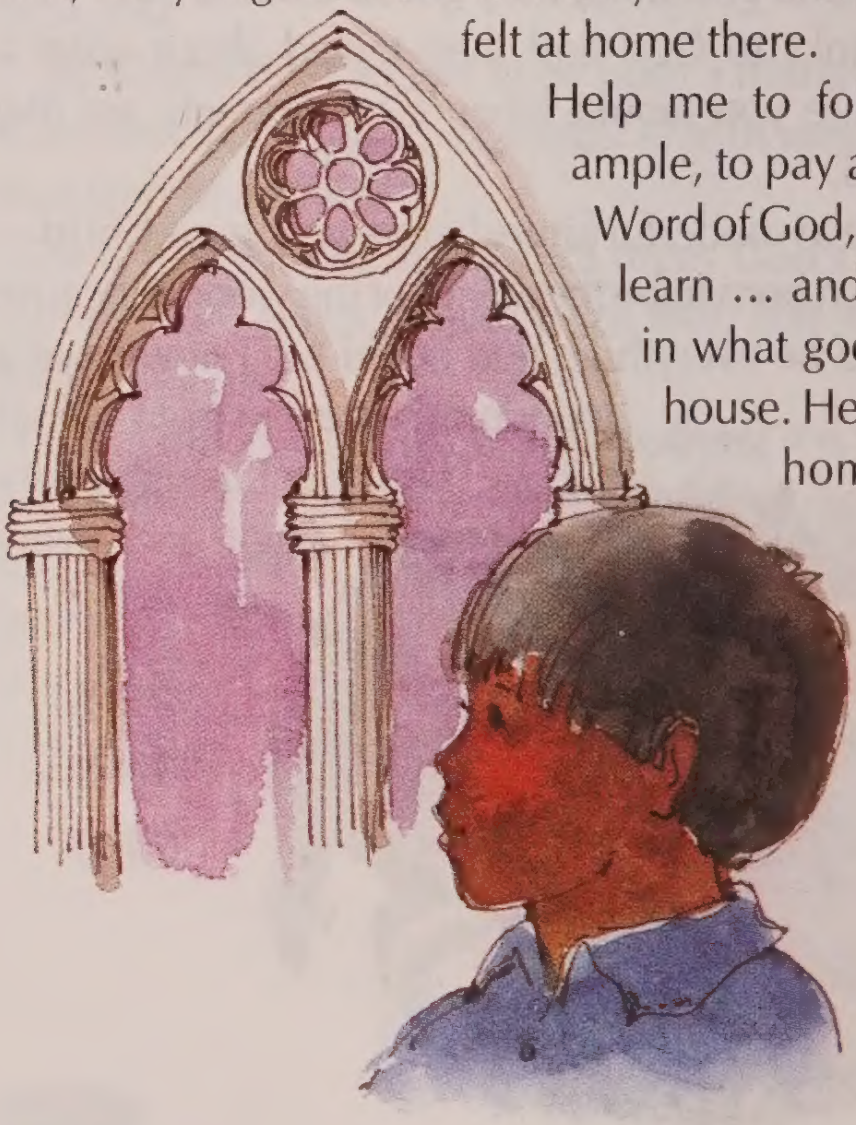
Savior,
I follow on ...
eagerly.

Friday ..... Read Luke 2:41-52 about

Young Jesus in the Temple

Lord Jesus, when you were a growing boy and Mary and Joseph took you to God's house, you **listened** to what was going on there. You asked questions when it was time to do that, and you gave answers when you were supposed to. You felt at home there.

Help me to follow your example, to pay attention to the Word of God, to listen and to learn ... and to participate in what goes on in God's house. Help me to feel at home there too. Amen.



Savior,
I follow on ...
attentively.

Saturday ..... Read Matthew 3:13-17 about

Jesus' Baptism

When you were baptized, Jesus Christ, there in the Jordan River by your cousin John, you took your place with us—human beings—showing what it means to trust the promises of God and to be God's own dear child.

In **my** baptism, you let me take my place with you. You let me know—for absolutely certain—that I am a child of God, that my place will be with you forever.

Wherever I may go, whatever I may do, please keep me in my place—because "with you" is the very best place to be! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... with you.

The Wise Men

When Jesus was born, the Wise Men followed a star, the special star which God provided them.

They knew where to look for the newborn King because they followed God's Word.

The Word and the star both led them to Jesus, a good place to be.

Temptation in the Wilderness

The devil was waiting for you, Jesus Christ, waiting in the wilderness to tempt you with bread and fame and empty promises.

The devil waits to tempt me too, I know, and it's not always easy to resist.

But you resisted, Jesus Christ. You trusted in God's Word and you quoted God's Word and you obeyed God's Word ... and you resisted.

Help me too to learn God's Word so that I may trust and obey it. Give me strength to resist temptation too. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... obediently.

How Jesus Chose Disciples

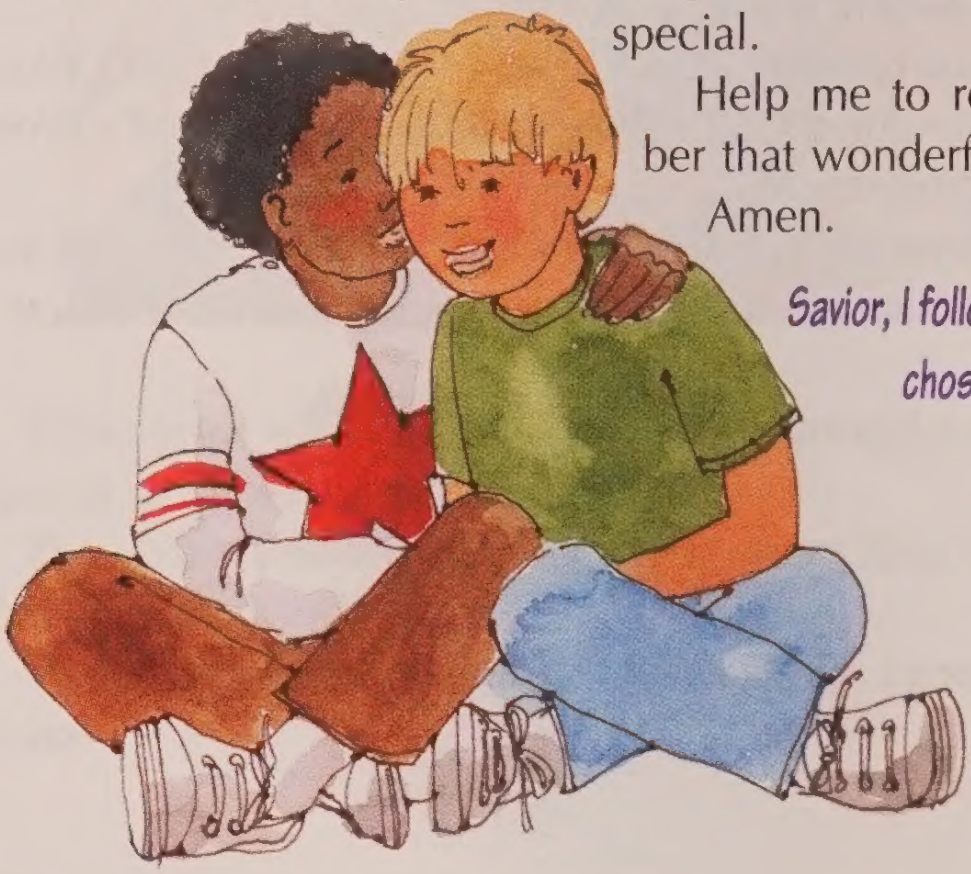
You chose them, Jesus Christ. One by one and sometimes two by two, you chose your disciples and invited them to follow you.

You chose them; they did not choose you. It was your own wonderful love that picked them out and made them special—disciples who would follow you.

You chose me too. I didn't have anything to say about it—you chose me, and by that choosing made me someone special.

Help me to remember that wonderful gift! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... chosen.



Those Who Invited Others

Andrew went and told his brother Peter. Philip went and told his friend Nathanael. As soon as people found out about you, Lord Jesus Christ, it seems they just had to share the good news. It's a good thing too, because those who were told went on to tell still more. The message grew and grew.

And now someone has told me—probably more than just **one** "someone" but lots of people: family, teachers, folks at church.

Is it my turn yet? Is there someone you want **me** to tell?

Savior, I follow on ... excitedly.

The Wedding at Cana

What fun it is to see you having a good time at a party, Jesus Christ, the wedding at Cana. It's good to know you like to have a good time too. And that you used your very first miracle to help other people have a good time too.

Help me to follow your example, to **enjoy** the good things you provide ... and to find ways to help others who are having trouble having fun. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... joyfully.

Friday of the First Week .... Read Luke 5:17-26 about

A Lame Man's Friends

The poor man was crippled, Lord. He couldn't follow you, at least not as easily as people who can walk.

But he had friends—who cared for him so much that they brought him to you and lowered him down through a hole in the roof. They worked together to show their care.

Help me to care about people with problems, loving Lord. Are there ways that I can work with others (or invite others) so that people may benefit from your healing care?

Show me the way. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... healed.

Sins Forgiven

When people brought their crippled friend to you, O Lord—when they lowered him through the roof for you to heal—before you made his body well enough to walk, you told him that his sins were forgiven.

I know that is important, but sometimes I forget how important it is. Lead me this Lent to realize my sin ... and before you do anything else for me, give me the joy of knowing that you forgive me, perfectly! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... forgiven.

Noah and the Animals

When the Great Flood was going to happen, God told Noah to build an ark and then fill it with animals. Two by two the animals followed Noah into the ark. So did Noah's wife, and their three sons and their wives.

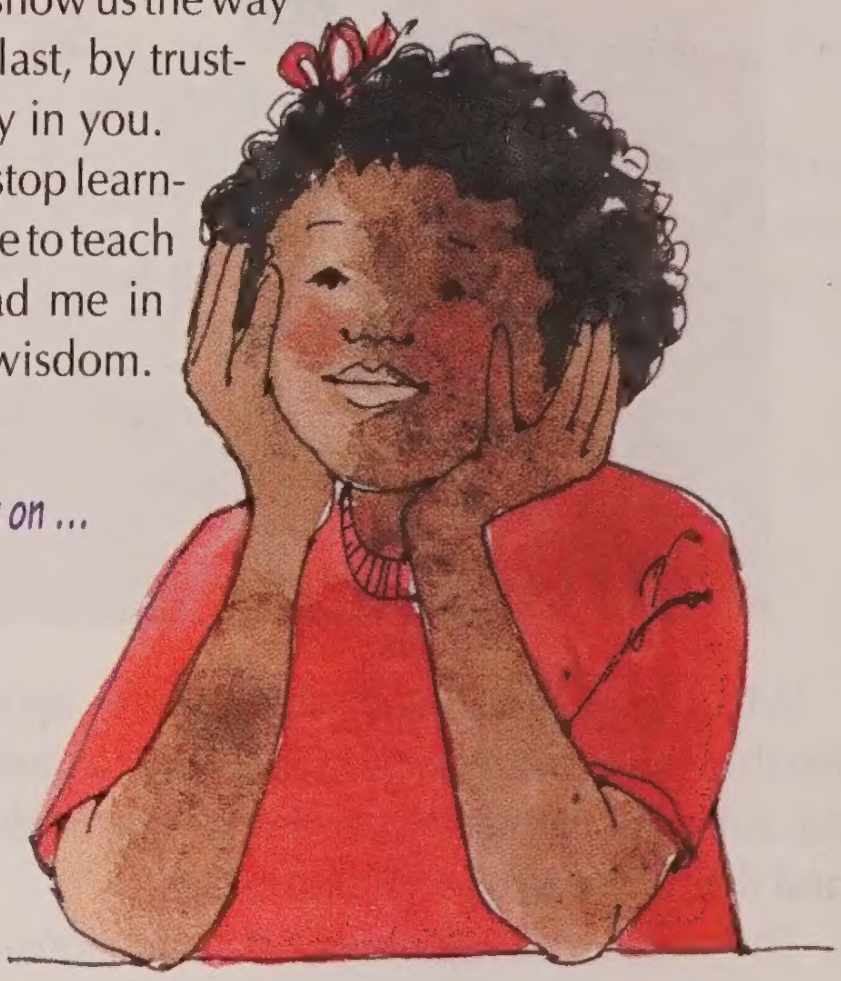
They were wise to follow God's directions—because God was leading them to safety from the storm.

Jesus the Teacher

They called you "Teacher," Jesus Christ, and they were right. You were—and are—the greatest teacher of them all, for you show us the heavenly Father. You show us God's will; you show us God's love; you show us God's plan to redeem the world; you show us the way to live as God's children; you show us the way to heaven, at last, by trusting completely in you.

I will never stop learning all you have to teach me, Lord. Lead me in the way of wisdom. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
learning.



The Good Samaritan

"Who is my neighbor?" someone asked you, Jesus Christ. And so you told a story about a man who was beaten up and robbed and left for dead. Two people who should have known better walked right by and didn't help. But then a person from another country did stop ... and offered care.

"Which of those three was 'neighbor' to the person who needed help?" you asked. The answer is so obvious that even I could tell you who.

"So do what that one did," you said. All right, that's what I want to do. Please help me be a good Samaritan.

Savior, I follow on ... helpfully.

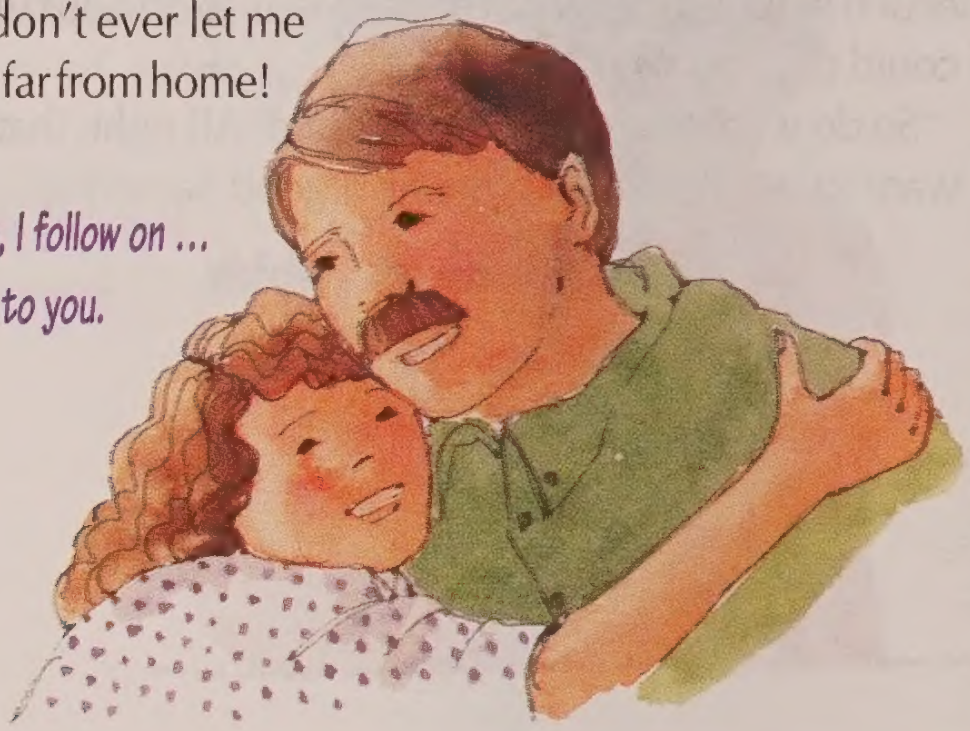
The Prodigal Son

A boy ran away from home. He took his father's money and went and spent it all ... and then didn't know what to do. He was broke. He was hungry. He was lost. He was far away from home.

"I know I don't deserve anything," he finally decided to try and say when he headed back. But he never got a chance to say it all, because his father ran out and hugged him and said, "Welcome home, son!"

That's a wonderful story you told, Jesus Christ. It teaches me how very loved I am, especially by my heavenly Father. Please don't ever let me wander far from home! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
close to you.



The Older Brother

The older brother in your story was **jealous**, wasn't he? He was so jealous of the welcome his runaway brother got when he came back home, that he refused to go to the welcome-home party. "You never gave **me** a party like that," he shouted at his dad. "You never needed one," his father reminded him.

O Jesus, do I sometimes get jealous of what other people have?—so jealous that I fail to notice everything that you have given me?

Help me to be as happy as you are when other people realize how good you are to each of us. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
happily.

Jesus and the Children

"Jesus loves the little children" is a song that many children love to sing—because we know that it is true, Lord Jesus Christ. When people brought children to you, you took them in your arms and blessed them. When they were sick, you healed them. When they were hungry, you fed them. You even woke up a little girl who had died!

You must love children very much, because you told all who want to follow you that they must become like children too.

Thank you for making me one of your children. I love you too! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... blessed.

The Centurion's Servant

"You don't have to come to my house," the Roman centurion told you, Lord. "When you say things, they happen!" He was a soldier, so he understood what it meant to give orders, and to obey them.

And he was right. You simply told him it was so, and the servant he was praying for recovered from his illness. You had cured him—when you say things, they happen!

So help me to listen to your Word. When I know what you are saying, I can begin to understand the wonderful things you make happen for me. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... listening.

Israel in the Wilderness

God did a wonderful thing for his people who had been slaves in a foreign land for many years. He led them to freedom.

For the 40 years it took to get to the Promised Land, the Lord provided a tall pillar to lead them through the wilderness. In the daytime it looked like a cloud, at night like a fire.

Jesus Calming the Sea

When the waves were high and the winds were frightening, when your disciples feared their boat would sink—they asked you for help, Lord Jesus, and you did help them. You were right there when they needed you. You told the storm to stop, and it did.

Since even winds and waves follow your commands, I feel safe following you. Keep reminding me that you are with me always, even when life seems stormy. Let your peace surround me, even then. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... peacefully.

Jesus Feeding the Crowd

All those people were hungry and you fed them, Jesus Christ—so much that they had leftovers. I don't understand how you could do that with just a few fish and a little bread, but you did.

Whenever I have been hungry, you have fed me too. I don't always understand how you do that for me either, but you do.

That makes it easier following you—knowing not only that you really **care** about me (you showed that by dying on the cross at last!), but also that you are **able** to care about me, even when I don't understand exactly how you do that.

Savior, I follow on ... satisfied.

Jesus Healing a Deaf Mute

"He does everything well," they said about you, Lord Jesus Christ, when you healed a man who couldn't hear or talk.

You did that so well—touching his ears and touching his tongue and then looking up to the sky. It was kind of you to take the time to do those things so he would understand.

It's kind of you to take the time to care for me too. If I look carefully, I can almost see you touching me, can almost hear your voice telling how much you care, how very much you are always doing for me.

You do everything well! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... cared for.

Ten Lepers Who Were Healed

Nine of them forgot to say thank you. You healed ten people of a terrible illness, Jesus Christ, and nine of them forgot to say thank you.

Am I like that sometimes? Are most people—like nine out of ten? This Lent help me recognize my blessings—you have even made me clean from **sin**, the most serious problem of all! Show me how much you have done for me (and still do, every day)—and then give me the faith to say THANK YOU, and to mean it with all my heart. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... thankfully.

Jesus and the Dead Girl

The little girl was dead. And everyone knows that dead bodies can't hear anything, can't do anything.

But when you told her to get up, Lord Jesus, that little girl **heard** ... and **did**. She was alive again! Her parents were so happy.

And so am I. For now I know that I can follow you anywhere, that even when I die your voice will call me, and I will rise again in everlasting life. Dead or alive, that is just about the happiest news a person could ever hear! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... alive!

Jesus Walking on Water

Lord Jesus, I want to follow you ... but sometimes you seem to walk in the strangest places ... like the time you came walking on the water, right up to the boat where your frightened disciples didn't know what to think. No, it wasn't a ghost; it was really **you**!

When Peter tried to follow you there, he got frightened by the winds and waves. I think I would have too. But you were there—yes, even there in that strange and fearful place—to reach out your hand and hold Peter fast.

I know that you are holding me too. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... wherever.

The Soldiers Who Followed David

The giant Goliath was big and frightening. The army of Israel didn't know what to do.

But God provided a young shepherd, David. With his shepherd's sling, he defeated the giant. With great joy the Israelites chased their enemies away. Many times after that David would lead the army to victory.

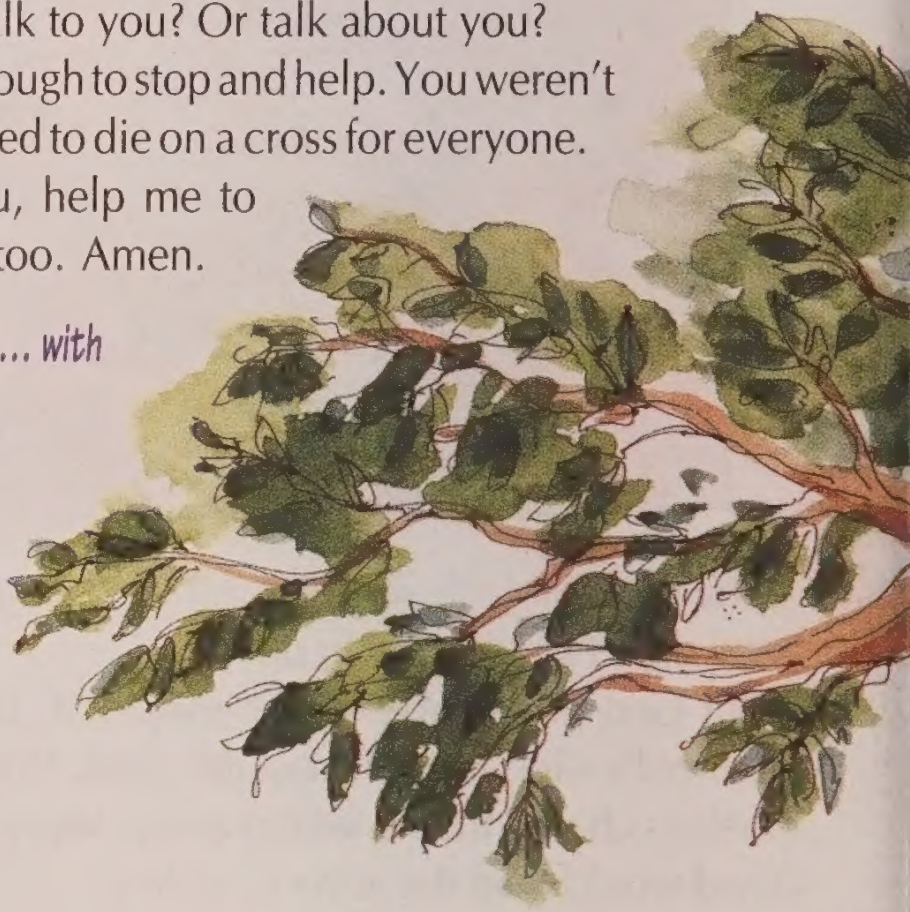
Blind Bartimaeus

They tried to make him be quiet, Lord. The poor man was blind and heard that you were passing by ... so he started yelling for you to notice him, and help ... and people told him not to make so much noise. They tried to keep poor Bartimaeus from you.

Do I ever do that? Do I get embarrassed when other people have problems? Do I get embarrassed about **you**, when people talk to you? Or talk about you?

You cared enough to stop and help. You weren't even embarrassed to die on a cross for everyone. As I follow you, help me to care that much too. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... with my eyes open.



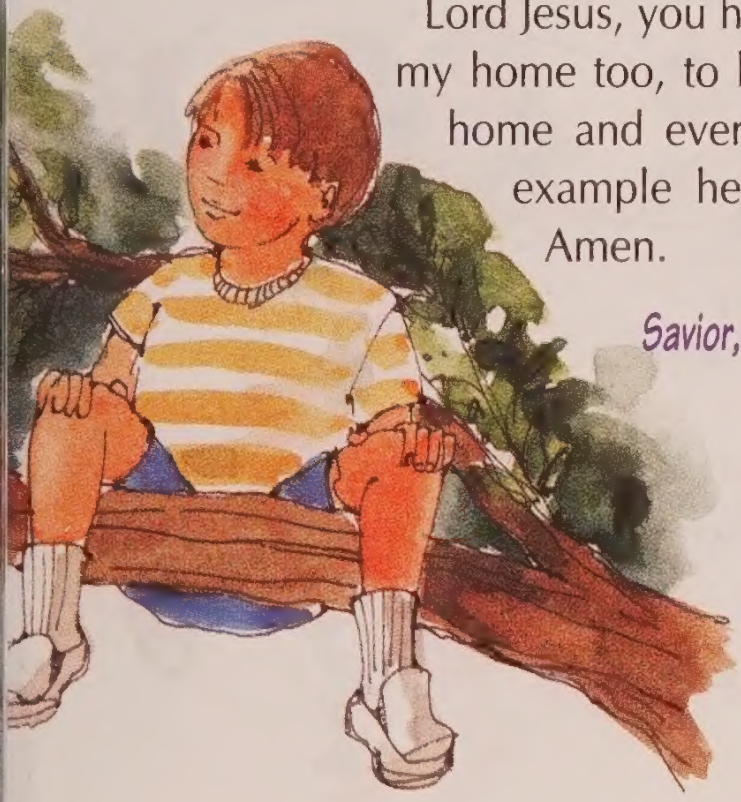
Zacchaeus

"Zacchaeus was a wee little man," the song goes; "he climbed up in a sycamore tree." You saw him there and told him you wanted to follow him home that day. Zacchaeus was so happy you cared about him that he promised to care too. He promised to **make up** for anything he had done wrong.

That's not always easy, I know. It takes a big person to say, "I'm sorry," and then to prove it.

Lord Jesus, you have offered to come to my home too, to be with me always, at home and everywhere. Let my good example help others follow you! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... a new person.



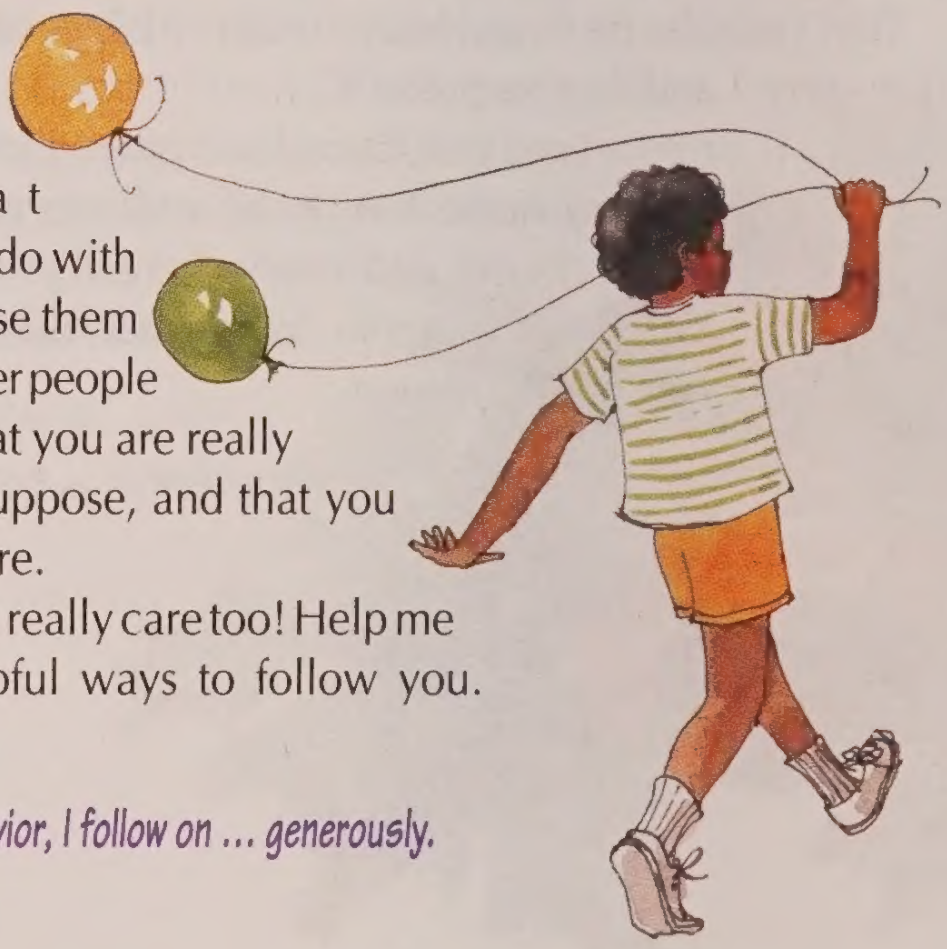
A Borrowed Donkey

"The Master needs it," you told your disciples to say. And they did. And the owner of the donkey said okay, and let them use his animal that day—for you to ride on, Jesus Christ.

Is there anything of **mine** that you can use? If I don't have a donkey, can I lend you my voice ... or my hands ... or my heart ... or my time?

What will you do with them? Use them to let other people know that you are really here, I suppose, and that you really care.

Well, I really care too! Help me find helpful ways to follow you. Amen.



Savior, I follow on ... generously.

The Children Singing

The children sang your praises that day, Lord Jesus, when you rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey. The children sang their happy praises—just the way my friends and I can do—and you were happy to hear them.

It isn't hard to praise you, Jesus Christ. I have so much to be thankful for. It isn't hard to praise you, but sometimes I forget ... and sometimes I'm not as happy about it as I should be. "Do we **have to** go to church?" I say.

Please fill my heart with happiness ... and fill my mouth with songs. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... praising you.

Greed and Generosity

When it comes to money, Lord, some people are greedy and some are generous. Right there in God's house, as you were watching, a poor widow put two small coins into the offering—and it was a generous gift, because that was all she had. You used her as a good example for others (like me) to follow.

Other people were so greedy that they were trying to turn God's house into a kind of shopping mall. You were angry at them; they were a bad example.

And where do I fit in? Which example do I follow? Lord Jesus, help me to follow you, for you were the most generous of all; you gave your life for me, unselfishly. What can I give to you?

Savior, I follow on ... unselfishly.

Washing the Disciples' Feet

Someone had to do it, I suppose. It was usually a servant's job (if the family had a servant)—to wash the feet of people who came in from the dusty roads. Someone had to do it.

But in the upper room that night everybody just stood around and waited ... until **you** took a towel and a bowl and did the lowly task no one else would stoop to do.

O Jesus, thank you for that kind of humility ... and for the lesson you said all of us could learn from it. If **you**, our Teacher and Lord, can stoop to do such humble tasks—what can I stoop to do? Do I ever follow you by bending down to serve?

Savior, I follow on ... at your service.

Daniel

Daniel followed his people on a sad journey as they were taken captive in a foreign land.

But even there, in far off Babylon, Daniel followed God's commands and would never—not ever—bow down to other gods ... even when that meant getting thrown into a den of hungry lions.

But the angel of the Lord followed Daniel there and kept him safe from harm.

The Last Supper

"Do this for the remembrance of me," you said, Lord Jesus Christ, when you broke the bread and shared the cup at your Last Supper. And we have never forgotten!

How can we forget? You gave yourself for us ... you give yourself to us. Together we Christians share something that is truly unforgettable.

"Lift up your hearts," we are invited. We lift them to the Lord! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... remembering.

Loving Jesus

"If you love me," you once said. Well, I do love you, Jesus Christ; you know I do. For you loved me with such a full and perfect love, I have no choice. I do love you.

"Then keep my commandments," you went on. That's how I am to show that I love you?

But **which** commandment? Where shall I begin? Honor my father and mother? Not stealing or lying or coveting?

"Love one another as I have loved you." Aha! If I love you, I show that love by loving other people too. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... lovingly.

"Thy Will Be Done"

"Thy will be done," you prayed there in the garden on the night before you died, my Lord. That isn't an easy prayer to pray, I know, because there are times (sometimes a lot of times) when I would rather have my will be done than someone else's—even God's.

But even though it wasn't easy to pray—or to obey—God's will was the right one, wasn't it?—the one that would let things happen the way God wanted them to. My will doesn't always have the best outcome, but **God's** will always does.

So keep teaching me to pray the only really proper prayer ... and to mean it. "Thy will be done." Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
according to your will.

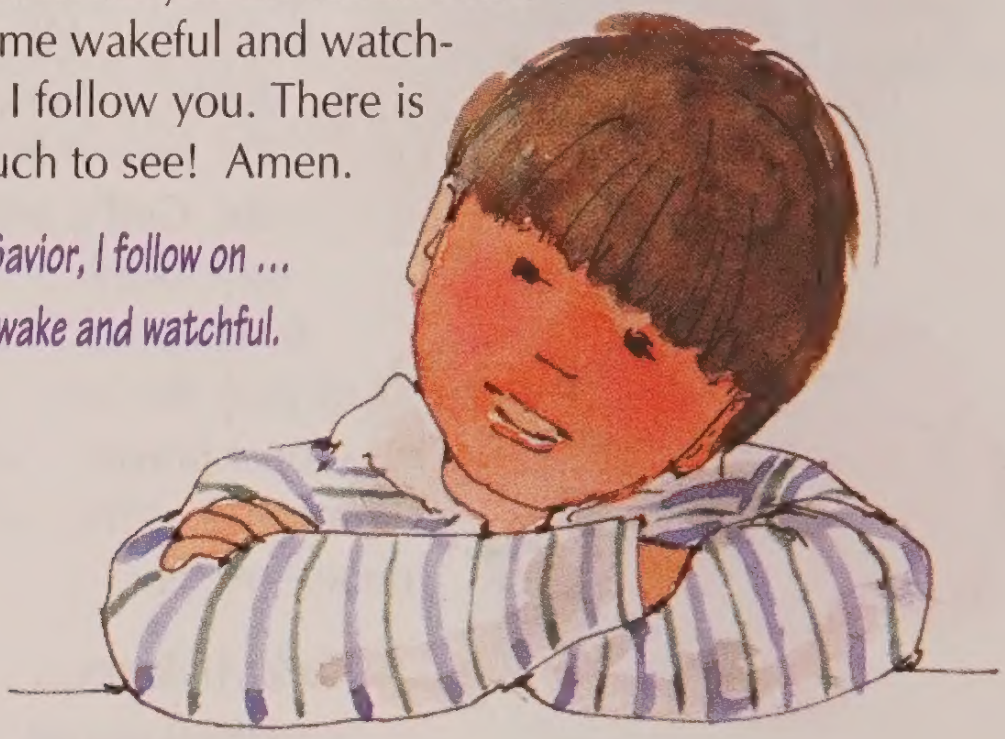
Falling Asleep

They fell asleep in the garden, Jesus. You asked them to stay awake and pray with you, but they didn't; they fell asleep. How could they do that?

How can I? "Couldn't you watch with me one hour?" you asked. Are there times when I resent an hour in your presence, in your house? Do I fall asleep in church? Or does my mind wander? Or do I wish it were over and I could be somewhere else?

You loved them anyway, Lord Jesus Christ, enough to die for them. And you love me. Please keep me wakeful and watchful as I follow you. There is so much to see! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
awake and watchful.



Judas

Judas was one of your closest friends, Lord Jesus. You even called him "Friend."

But then he did a wicked thing. He betrayed you. He gave away the secret of where you were praying. He led your enemies to the place where they could find you and capture you. He even **kissed** you, so they would know which person to seize.

And when Judas did that, you still called him "Friend"! How kind and forgiving you are, my Lord! Why didn't Judas realize that? Why don't I sometimes?

Savior, I follow on ... your friend.

Speaking the Truth

You spoke the truth, Lord Jesus Christ. That isn't always easy to do. When you were on trial and people asked questions, you answered honestly. — "Are you the one we're looking for?" - "I am," you said. — "Are you, in fact, the Son of God?" - "I am," you said once more.

It isn't always easy to tell the truth. Sometimes it hurts. You know that, don't you, Jesus Christ? You know how painful it can be to stand up for what is right when there are so many people against you. You know ... and there are times when I know too.

At times like those, help me remember you! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... bravely.

The Thief on the Cross

As he was dying on a cross, the thief on Jesus' right turned and prayed, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus promised, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

By dying on his own cross, Jesus made it possible to follow him all the way to heaven!

Keeping Silent

If it is hard to speak up when the truth needs to be said, sometimes it is just as hard to keep quiet when you should. Sometimes even harder.

You know that, don't you, Jesus Christ? When people were saying all kinds of cruel lies about you, you could have shouted back. You could have told them all to "go to hell" and they would have, because it was **you**, the Son of God, saying it.

But you kept silent when that was the right thing to do.

O Lord, it's hard! I need your help to follow you—not only when the parade is loud and boisterous (like on Palm Sunday) but also when it's deathly still. Show me the way! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
uncomplaining.

The Crown of Thorns

It was a cruel thing to do, to make a crown out of sharp thorns, and then to pound it onto your head, Lord Jesus Christ. That must have hurt a lot.

For you deserve a better crown than that, the very finest crown that there could ever be, because you are the greatest King that there could ever be.

Because you wore that awful crown, you promise me a crown of everlasting life. Never let me forget that you wore that painful crown of thorns to make me a member of the Royal Family. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... thankfully.

Jesus Prays "Father, Forgive"

Lord Jesus Christ, as you were hanging on the cross, you prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That must have been hard. Didn't the nails hurt? Didn't the thorns? Didn't the sores from that awful whipping? Weren't you angry, Son of God? I think I would have been.

But you forgave them ... and prayed for them. Or should I say you prayed for **us**? For there are times when I don't realize what I am doing, and how much it must hurt you.

But still you say, "Father, forgive." And it happens! Thank you! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ...
forgiven.

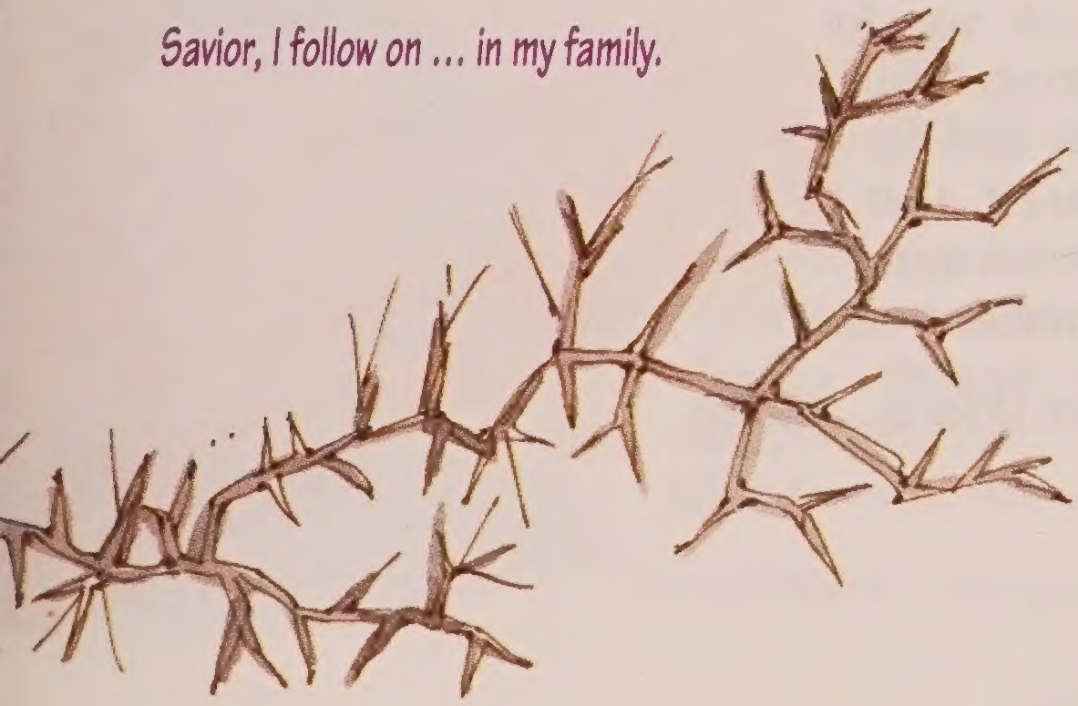
Our Lord's Family

"Behold your mother," you said to that kind disciple who was standing near the cross. Then to Mary, your dear mother, you said, "Behold your son." Even in your great agony you took the time to care about your family.

Families must be very important to you, Jesus Christ, important enough to care about even while you were dying for the sins of the whole world.

Since you care so much about my family, help me to appreciate them too. How can I show my care? How can I follow you? How can **we**?

Savior, I follow on ... in my family.



Trusting the Heavenly Father

Even as you were dying, Jesus Christ, you kept on trusting in your heavenly Father. You placed your life in God's strong hands and knew you would be safe, that God would see you through.

Because you died with that great faith, all those who follow you know that we can trust our heavenly Father too. We have God's promise that we will never be forsaken.

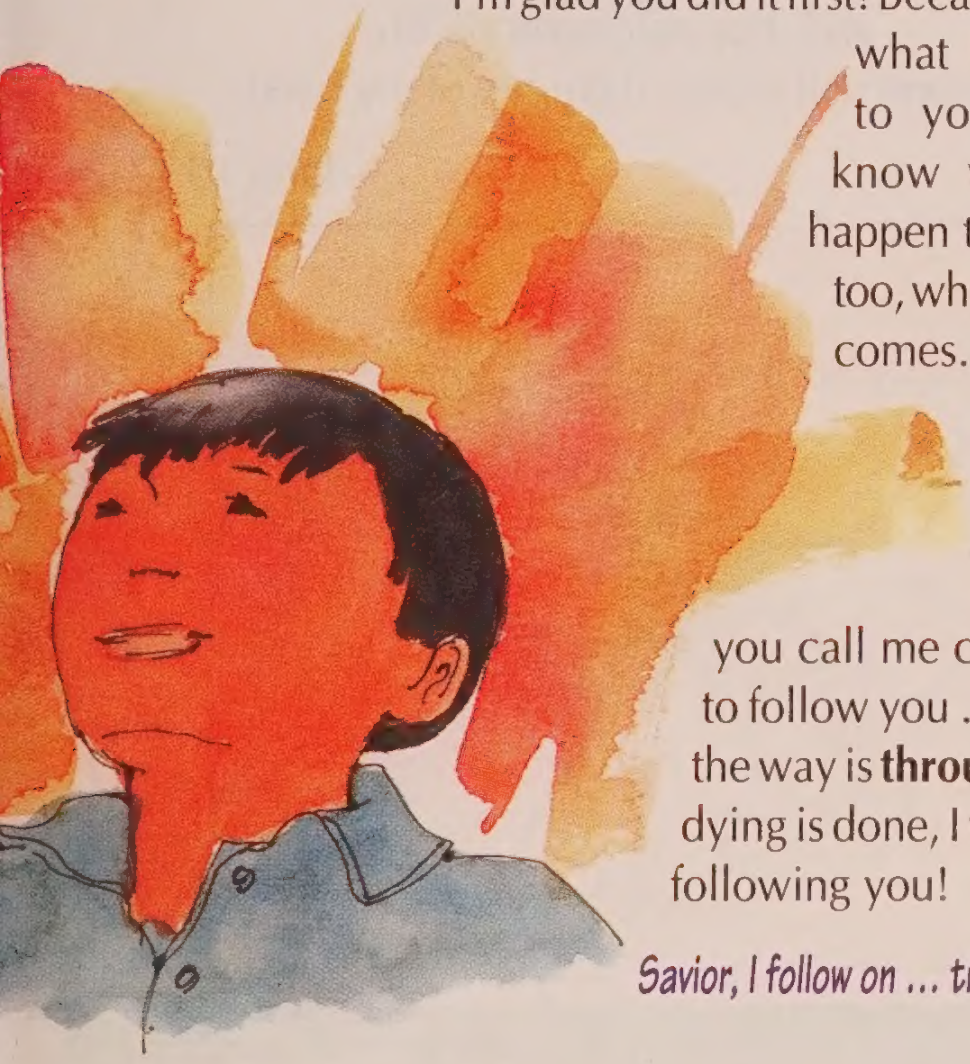
Thank you for enduring, Jesus Christ, and for the trust that makes our trusting possible. Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... trusting.

What Happens Next!

O Jesus Christ, my Savior and my Friend, when all the suffering was done ... you died. Some day that will happen to me too, I know. And you were buried. Some day that will happen to me too.

I'm glad you did it first! Because I know what happened to you next, I know what will happen to me next too, when my time comes.



Even through the grave you call me confidently to follow you ... because the way is **through**. When dying is done, I will still be following you! Amen.

Savior, I follow on ... triumphantly!

Easter Sunday—The Resurrection of our Lord

A Promise to Followers

"My sheep hear my voice,
and I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life,
and they will never perish.
No one will snatch them out of my hand."

—John 10:27-28

"Savior, I Follow On"—A Children's Prayer Book For Each Day Of Lent was written by Arden W. Mead with art by Sally Beck, and is published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. Phone: 1-800-325-9414. ©Copyright 1996. All rights Reserved. Printed in the USA. KL-D

FORTY DAYS TO CALVARY

PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURE READINGS for LENT

DONALD F. HINCHEY

Ash Wednesday ..... Matthew 6: 21

Counting Change

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Lord of the ashes, the journey is about to begin. Though the days of the year lengthen, the days grow short leading to that awful death in Jerusalem. Enable me to use these 40 days as inventory. Help me to set aside the cares and sinful barriers which I so naturally erect between us and to find in the darkness of these Lenten days a light which will shine brightly on the treasure of your love. Amen.

Where is your treasure? What do you put first in your life? What do your appointment book and the contents of your wallet or purse tell you about your priorities?

Thursday ..... Matthew 26: 1,2

Horror And Love

"When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.'"

Yes, I know that, Lord. I've always known that, and perhaps that is why it no longer comes as a shock to me. The death of a friend, a newspaper obituary, a television news story of innocent suffering—those shake me to the core, but your being "handed over to be crucified" seems natural, normal. Like it should be. In this Lenten day convince me again of the horror of your suffering and of the Love that drove you to the cross ... for me! Amen.

Where in the newspaper obituaries this day might you sense a tragic death, an unnecessary death? Pray for the mourners.

Friday ..... Matthew 26: 3, 4

Their Plot And Mine

"Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest who was called Caiaphas and they conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him."

They "conspired," Lord, to arrest you. Their spirits joined for this heinous evil against one so innocent, so good. I too would conspire against the poor, the innocent, the helpless, by the way I make my choices, spend my money, allow others to set agendas which advance the position of the privileged and further oppress your "little ones." Forgive me, Lord, for my conspiring. Breathe into me your Spirit of love as I prepare to join you in your journey to the cross. Amen.

Where, today, might you conspire with others in a Christlike way?

Saturday ..... Matthew 26: 6,7

Free To Sacrifice

"Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table."

She poured oil on you, Jesus?! While you sat at table?! Such a strange scene that must have been! A leper's home is no place for a respectable Rabbi in the first place, and a woman's act of love is also out of place there. Yet you accept them both—the leper's meal, the woman's oil, and you stand ready to accept my sacrifice as well. Now, free me to sacrifice! Let me dig deep into the treasure of who I am and what I have, and pour myself before you this Lent. Amen.

What are your sacrifices for Jesus this Lent?

Sunday ..... Matthew 28: 1

Resurrection Preview

"After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb."

It's Sunday, Lord, a time to peek into the tomb of your resurrection. How we need to be reminded as we enter Lent that it is not the final chapter either of your story or of our life. The two women named Mary went to see the tomb and there were shocked to new life. Grant that we might slowly, deliberately take this Lenten journey so that when that Great Day of Easter dawns on us, we too might bask in the dawn of your eternal life. Amen.

Where in your worshipping community this day are there "glimpses of resurrection"? How, amidst the purple and minor hymn modes, are you acknowledging the ultimate victory of Jesus?

Monday ..... Matthew 26: 14,15

At What Cost?

"Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I betray him to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver."

Everybody has a price, Lord. Your sad friend Judas sealed your fate (and his) with such a sordid contract, for such a paltry amount. What must have driven him to the chamber of the priests? Why did he betray you? I will never know of his motivation, but I do know of my own. For I too have my price and I daily sell you out for far less than thirty pieces of silver. Forgive my greed, the fearful insecurity that is always asking, "What will you give me?" You have given your all for me and that is enough! Amen.

What is your "thirty pieces of silver"? Where do you back away, even betray your Lord Jesus out of greed or fear?

Tuesday ..... Matthew 26: 19

Yes!

"So the disciples did as Jesus directed them and they prepared the Passover meal."

Obedience does not come easy for me, Lord. The disciples did as you directed them and a meal was prepared, one which we prepare with each setting of the altar for Holy Communion. I am more likely to suggest an alternative to you, Lord. I think I know a better way, at least a more interesting way. Or, more likely, I don't have the time today to follow through on your direction. Forgive me, Lord. Let me say merely "yes" when you direct me. Amen.

As a meal is prepared and set before you this day, remember and give thanks for the ones who follow the Lord's direction.

Wednesday ..... Matthew 26: 21, 22

Directed Distress

"And while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.' And they became greatly distressed ...."

Now, what kind of dinner conversation was that, Lord? To speak of betrayal during such a lovely meal? To distress your dinner guests with talk of death? I too am distressed daily—by waiters who don't bring my food on time, by children who fail to show respect, by a government not doing my will and by weather which inconveniences. Help me to be distressed by the right things, Lord. Keep me uncomfortable in these Lenten days for the sake of your Kingdom, Lord. Amen.

What distressed you yesterday? Why did youl "lose your cool"? What caused you to pull into yourself and brood? Was it really all that important?

Thursday ..... Matthew 26: 31

Scattered Sheep

(Jesus said) "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' "

Scattered sheep are sheep at risk, Lord. I see them standing on the street corners of our city—lonely, belligerent youths smoking their cigarettes, spewing foul speech into the air. I see them in the school yard—confused children with a vacant look in their eyes and no friends with whom to laugh. I see the scattered sheep within myself, Lord, often aimless, ever searching. Gather us in to you this day, Lord. I long for my bruised shepherd and my fellow sheep. Amen.

Look for scattered sheep this day and in some small way assure them of your love and Jesus' love.

Friday ..... Matthew 26: 32

A Step Ahead

"But after I am raised up I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

You are always steps ahead of us, aren't you, Jesus? When I was a child, lost in the vastness of that shopping mall with my parents so worried, you were ahead of us, reuniting us. When the concerns of the classroom so vexed us, you had been there all along, beckoning us on in courage. When we entered that operating room, you had been there before, and so we could cease our worry. And when the last moment is upon us, and our eyelids close for the last time, even there, you are steps ahead of us, beckoning us through death into eternal life. I need to remember, Lord Jesus, that you have always promised to go ahead of us. Amen.

As you go through this day where do you see Jesus' footprints? He has already been there, you know.

Saturday ..... Matthew 26: 33, 35

Of Course?

"Peter said to him, 'Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you .... Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples."

Of course I will die with you, Jesus, of course. And you know that I will not deny you. No! Never! And so said all the disciples including me. Every day. It is so simple in the safety of my home or sanctuary to mutter words of discipleship in that "of course" tone of voice. But when called to account around the campfire, when having seen you brutalized, blasphemed and condemned, I, too, sulk into the shadows. O forgive me, gracious Lord, and let me stand alongside of you as you are present in the battered ones of this earth. I will die with you, Lord Jesus. Every day. Amen.

Where in the course of this day will you allow yourself to die with Jesus?

Sunday ..... Matthew 28:2

Resurrection Preview

"And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it."

Oh, that we could have been there, Risen Jesus! Oh, how I long to see that angel roll the stone away today! There are massive rocks of sickness and separation, division and even death itself blocking the future. And though they seem so immovable, somewhere, out there, awaits an angel to nudge the boulders and roll them aside. Send an angel into our midst this Resurrection Day to shine Easter's Sunlight into the dark times that stretch ahead of us. Amen.

How have supposedly "immovable" rocks been rolled aside in your life thus far? What is to prevent such moving in the future?

Monday .....Matthew 26:36

Waiting With Jesus

"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane ...."

The days have slipped by so quickly, my loving Lord. Only yesterday you were teaching, sitting at a table, strolling the streets of the city. Now you await your betrayers in a garden. This week I would wait with you for the betrayal, the violence, the suffering and finally your death. Let me wait in peace with you, Lord Jesus! Let me see where Gethsemane is found in my world! Amen.

Jesus often retreated to a quiet garden to pray. Find such a place today and spend time alone in prayer.

Tuesday ..... Matthew 26: 37

Bearing Our Grief

"He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated."

O Son of Mary, though you are indeed Son of God, it is here in a garden, awaiting betrayal, that we see you most clearly as one of us. You are no wooden warrior, no stiff-upper-lipped Messiah as the darkness descends. I love those heroic paintings of you in the Garden, Jesus, but truth is that your grief and agitation is so much like mine. Does that mean that you know my grief as well? That you step inside of my agitation? Thank you, my Lord and my Brother, for now I can share my grief and agitation with you, knowing that you have borne it first. Amen.

How might you bear others' griefs this day? How might you soothe them in their agitation?

Wednesday ..... Matthew 26: 39

Let This Cup Pass

"And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me ....'"

I have prayed that very prayer too, Lord Jesus. Yet the cup has never been so bitter for me. I would just as soon not have the inconvenience, wouldn't be bothered with silly people, would like to have more time for myself. The Cup that you would hand back to your Father is death itself and death for the sins of the whole world. Such bitterness I will never know, for you held the Cup firmly in your hands. Amen.

What cup of sorrow are you drinking this day? What other cups do you see drunk around you? How might you offer to take that cup from another?

Thursday ..... Matthew 26: 39

Aggressive Faith

"Yet, not what I want, but what you want."

Your waiting in the garden, Lord Jesus, is not passive. Even here you throw yourself into the Father's arms, knowing that what God wants is best. Give to me that same active, aggressive faith as I wait. Amen.

What life decisions have you cast back into God's arms? What was God's answer?

Friday ..... Matthew 26: 40

Caught Sleeping

"Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping."

You caught me, Lord! Discovered me fetus-like in the dust, snoring loudly while you sweat blood. My sleep means so many things: Am I bored of this Lenten wait? Have I exhausted myself in trivia so that I have no energy to watch with you? Am I so satiated with the things of this world that I faint from fullness? Awaken me, Lord! Shake me, shock me with the light of your love that I might, renewed, wait and watch with you! Amen.

How do you spiritually snooze? Why? What awakens you?

Saturday ..... Matthew 26: 41

The Flesh Is Weak

"Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

You know, all-knowing Lord, how weak is my flesh. Though my words are filled with bravado, I still fall back over and over into patterns of behavior that are not only sinful, but self-defeating. It is only as I confront my weak flesh and turn it over to you that I am able to overcome it. Do not bring me to the time of trial, Lord Jesus, but strengthen my spirit. And my flesh. Amen.

In what context have you used Jesus' expression lately? Where has the spirit been willing, but the flesh weak for you?

Sunday .....Matthew 28: 5, 6

Resurrection Preview

"But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here ....."

Of course we're looking for you, Lord. Isn't that the work of Lent? To be searching for you? We search the Scriptures, search our traditions, search our hearts in the hope of finding you. For we are empty without you. At the end of our Lenten journey, however, there awaits an angel who will tell us that you are truly elusive—seldom where we want to contain and find you. Perhaps you are out searching for us. Find us, risen Lord! We are waiting for you! Amen.

Where do you search for Jesus?

Monday ..... Matthew 26: 45, 46

The End Begins

'Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'"

The moment is upon you, Lord Jesus. You have always known that the bitter cup would be drunk, but this is the instant when the end begins. I too sense danger all around. The newspaper headlines and TV stories are laced with violence and cruelty. Who is safe in this sinful world? In your presence I too can commit myself to life, assured of your care. I too will be going with you, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Open today's paper. Peruse the violence. Pray for the victims and perpetrators.

Tuesday ..... Matthew 26: 47

Swords And Clubs

"While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people."

Swords and clubs!? They're bringing out the artillery to take you into custody, O gentle Jesus! Did they not hear your words of peace and love? Did they not believe your gentleness? But am I any better? I too harbor the secret belief that what I cannot get in peace I must take by force. Forgive the swords and clubs which I carry into these days, dear gentle Lord of the cross. Amen.

What instruments of coercion (swords and clubs) do you carry into battle each day? How might you lay them aside and let the Holy Spirit work?

Wednesday ..... Matthew 26: 49

A Kiss Returned?

"At once, Judas came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi' and kissed him."

How strange that he kissed you, my Jesus. A kiss is a sign of affection, not hatred; of trust and closeness, not betrayal. Did you return the kiss, I wonder? Did you embrace the traitor? I have known your forgiving kiss when I would turn away from you, even when I would betray your love. Forgive us both, Jesus—Judas and me—when our kisses would betray. Amen.

Contemplate kisses today. What do they signify? How does Jesus "kiss" you this day?

Thursday ..... Matthew 26: 52

Sword Takers? Peacemakers!

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back in its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.'"

Lord of peace, you know that a sword is the last resort. When human beings have reached the point of powerlessness, they take the sword, and so many tragically die by that sword! I would pray this day for the nations of this world and our leaders. Give them wisdom. I would pray for peacemakers. Give them patience and tenacity. I would pray that anger would be banished and swords turned to plowshares. Amen.

Today, especially, be a peacemaker.

Friday ..... Matthew 26: 53

An Easy Way Out

"Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

You too had an easier way out, didn't you, Jesus? There were many ways to drink that bitter cup, but none as effective as the violent cross. When I would consider easier ways out, cheaper, less costly paths of discipleship, remind me of your cross and the painful choice of suffering for my sake. Amen.

When have you unwisely chosen "the easy way out"? What discipleship questions do you face in which "the easy way out" is tempting you? Pray about them.

Saturday ..... Matthew 26: 56b

He Stands Alone

"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."

Gracious Teacher, how many of your days have been filled with crowds, multitudes, throngs of admirers seeking your favor, your touch, your healing? But in this twilight day of darkness you stand alone, deserted by those closest to you. I too have known loneliness, but nothing like this! Forgive me when I desert you. Give me courage to stand strong that I might be counted among those whose lives are a bold witness for you and your Gospel. Amen.

Who do you sense are the lonely people in your life? How might you stand beside them?

Sunday ..... Matthew 28: 8

Resurrection Preview

"So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples."

Risen Lord, you know how complex life is, for you once lived in this life. You know how much reason we have to fear and why we cower within our homes, behind locked doors, trembling at that which we can neither control nor understand. Send a ray of Easter joy into my Lenten sobriety, I pray. Let my fear be overtaken by the courage of the empty tomb, until these dark days of Lent open into an Easter joy which will know no end. Amen.

What is a "fearful joy"? A "joyful fear"? What is causing you to fear these Lenten days? How might Easter's joy give you courage?

Monday ..... Matthew 26: 58

The On-Looker

"But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end."

"At a distance." How can I be so harsh with Peter when I too keep my distance in discipleship? I should be standing beside you, Lord, but I too lurk in the shadows, snuggle up to the enemy, driven more by curiosity than compassion. Forgive my cowardly voyeurism, Jesus, and beckon me from the shadows to stand with you in the light. Amen.

How do you "disciple at a distance"?

Tuesday ..... Matthew 26: 63

The Silence Speaks

"But Jesus was silent."

What are you saying by your silence, dear Lord Jesus? Are you contemptuous of those who would stand in judgment over you? Is your mind elsewhere? Have you already answered their charges by your life and your love? Your silence speaks volumes! When I sense that you are silent to my prayers, I can only imagine that you are ignoring me. But there is so much more in your silence. Lord, let even your silence speak to my heart! Amen.

Be particularly silent this day. Listen well.

Wednesday ..... Matthew 26: 74

We Never Knew

"I do not know this man!"

In a curious way, Peter was right, wasn't he, Jesus? He never really knew you. None of us did. We put upon you our expectations, projected on you our petty rationalizations, made of you an image to serve ourselves. We continue to do that, don't we? And yet you invite us to *really* know you—as Lord of our lives and Savior of our selves. I want to know you in these Lenten days, Lord! Draw me to you! Amen.

How have you fashioned Jesus into your own image? How do you keep from knowing him as he is?

Thursday ..... Matthew 26: 75

A Time For Tears

".... and Peter went out and wept bitterly"

Lord, Lent is a time for tears. We weep for others whose lives labor under sin's consequences. I weep for children, abused and abandoned. For friends who are sick and enemies unrepentant. My tears flow for dreams that will never be realized. Let my tears be also for myself this Lent. Let them wash away my guilt and shame, my failures and denial; and let them be a river of healing that brings me to you. Amen.

Look for tears today. Who is crying? Why? How can you bring healing?

Friday ..... Matthew 27: 4, 5

The Tragedy Of Judas

"Judas went and hanged himself."

How you must have wept to watch him hanging there, Lord! For you the tragedy of Judas could not have been only that he betrayed you, but that, in his repentance he never accepted your forgiveness. Am I as immune to your forgiveness as he? Do I hear your graceful love only as a doctrine? Forgive the despair that imagines my sin so special that it is unworthy of your forgiveness! Amen!

Seek to offer your forgiveness to someone today.

Saturday ..... Matthew 27: 21

A Sorry Substitute

"The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas!'"

What do I shout today, Lord? What do you hear? "Give us Barabbas," the crowd before you once shouted. But I shout as loudly, "Give me success!" "Give me my friends!" "Give me some pleasure, but give me no grief!" Barabbas was a sorry substitute for you, yet I find myself forever choosing lesser lords over my life. As I walk these Lenten days, keep me ever aware of my choices. Remind me always that you have chosen me. Amen.

Who or what is your "Barabbas"?

Sunday ..... Matthew 28: 9

Resurrection Preview

"Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet and worshipped him."

Risen Lord, you choose to meet us in your way, at your time, with your own greeting. The days of Lent are drawing to a close and we long to see traces of your victory in the darkness of these days. Bring us to your feet in the joy of your resurrection. Amen.

How has Jesus greeted you this week? Where have you seen him? How will you worship him?

Monday .....Matthew 27: 24

Waters Of Innocence

"So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.'"

O innocent Jesus, you began your ministry by the waters of the Jordan River; how ironic that your death is signaled by water's splash. Like Pilate, I too proclaim my innocence daily. I wash myself in waters of accusation, self-justification and neglect. Bring me daily back to the baptismal bowl, the water that proclaims true innocence! Amen.

Consider your baptism each time you turn the faucet on today. You are truly clean through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Tuesday ..... Matthew 27: 25

Cleansed By Blood

"Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and our children!'"

And so it is, Lord Jesus, that your blood **is** on us and our children. Your forgiving blood on the cross cleanses us; your sacrificial blood pays the price of our transgressions. Your blood shed in death gives us life forever. Though betrayed by the multitudes, you still died for each of us as if each were the only one. Let us remember this Lenten day the blood that was shed for us. Amen.

Where has blood been for you a symbol of life?

Wednesday ..... Matthew 27: 28, 29

Do I Mock You?

"They stripped him, and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail King of the Jews!'"

That you, Lord of heaven and earth, would submit to such mockery only confirms your love for me. Do I mock you as once they did? Does my hollow love strip you anew? Is my tepid devotion a scarlet robe on your shoulders? Do you feel my anger and resentment of others as thorns into your brow? Forgive the mockery of my life, Lord Jesus, and put your Holy Spirit within me that I might ever proclaim you the King of all my days. Amen.

When have you been mocked? How did you respond?

Thursday ..... Matthew 27: 32

A Blessed Burden

"As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross."

I recall once feeling sorry for Simon, the cross-bearer, Lord Jesus. Just minding his own business, he walked too closely, perhaps, to where you stumbled and fell. How he must have resented the lumber on his shoulders as he walked the way to Golgotha. Yet, how blessed was his burden! Teach me to so regard the crosses that are placed upon me for I too am resentful, filled with self-pity and indignation. Show me that the crosses I bear are, ultimately, yours. Amen.

What crosses have you borne recently? In what spirit have you borne them? How might they be Jesus' cross?

Friday ..... Matthew 27: 33

Places Of The Skull

"And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means place of a skull) they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it."

And so your journey ends, beloved Jesus, raised high on the place of a skull, the symbol of death's permanency. You refuse the numbing drug in order that your pain may be complete. You hang enthroned over those whose hatred has condemned you. And yet, our eyes cannot help but see a victory forming in your shame. Bring us to the places of the skull in our lives, knowing that you will forever reign over them. Amen.

Were Jesus' crucifixion to happen today, in your town, where would it be? Why?

Saturday ..... Matthew 27: 36

Death Watch

"Then they sat down there and kept watch over him."

Why? Why were the soldiers watching you die? Was it morbid curiosity? A concern that some brave followers might stage a raid to snatch you from the cross? Or did your death have a beauty to it that was strangely compelling? And why, crucified Lord, do we, your Church, gather each year in these Lenten days to watch you die as well? Take from us mere morbid curiosity and fill us with a love for such a love as yours that would give its life for those who keep watch over you. Amen.

Why have you observed Lent this year?

Palm Sunday ..... Matthew 21: 9

Resurrection Preview

"And the crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'"

King Jesus, such a bittersweet day is this Palm Sunday. Hands that are upraised in praise will soon be clenched fists. The foliage before you will soon be a barren cross over your shoulders, and the shouts of "Hosanna" will be silent by Friday. But for now, let us praise you in anticipation of the darkness. For now, remind us that "Hosanna" is our prayer for salvation. And that is precisely what you intend to do in this darkest of weeks. Amen.

Save a palm branch this day. Make of it a cross.

Monday ..... Matthew 27: 37

A True Inscription

"Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'"

Did you remember hanging there, my dying Monarch, that once, so long ago, three kings came to visit you? When you could barely walk they came from the east with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gifts fit for a king. But now, as you die, another gift hangs above your head, cynically proclaiming your kingship. I wonder if the crowds laughed at the sarcasm. Perhaps, if they did not, it was because they knew the inscription was true. Let my life this day be such an inscription. Amen.

How might you let others know that Jesus is your King today?

Tuesday ..... Matthew 27: 38

The Company You Keep

"Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left."

Oh, the company you keep on the cross, my Savior! Of course, throughout your ministry you were forever criticized for the sinners who seemed drawn to you. A tax collector was your disciple, loose women sat at your feet and pesky children on your lap. Why should it be any different now in your death? Draw me to you as well. For, standing by your cross, I cannot boast of my pedigree or righteousness. I too am a bandit with the best of them. Steal from me my sin! Amen.

In today's newspaper find the crime reports. Note the names of those who have committed crimes. Pray for them.

Wednesday ..... Matthew 27: 41, 42

Reason To Believe

"In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 'He saved others, he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now and we will believe in him.'"

Even as we watch you die, we set conditions for our faith, don't we, Lord? The priests, scribes and elders echo us well: "If you will come down from the cross, then we will believe." "If you will cure me, I will believe." "If you will bail me out of my difficulty, I will believe." Take from us this "if-then" faith so that we may see in your death and resurrection the only reason to believe. Amen.

How do you set conditions for faith? How does God address your "conditional faith"?

Maundy Thursday .....Matthew 26: 26, 27

Feast In The Shadows

"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them saying, 'Drink from it, all of you.'"

Lord of the table, in this dark and empty week you would fill me with your body and blood. Bring me to your table this night to feast in the shadow of the cross. "Take, eat! ... Take, drink!" you sweetly command. Flood me with your life through this bread and wine, and let me leave in the remembrance that you are found in life's simple elements. Your cross still awaits, but we shall be strengthened. Amen.

Receive Holy Communion this day.

Good Friday ..... Matthew 27: 46

Forsaken!

"And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

Forsakenness! My dying Jesus, I have been alone, I have known solitude, I have felt lonely, but I cannot imagine the forsakenness which you now feel. I have always known, somewhere, that you were near me, even in my loneliness; but on your cross, for my sake, you were stripped of that assurance. Such comfort is mine because such forsakenness was yours. You will never leave me, Lord, not even at the hour of my death. Amen.

Be still on this Good Friday. Seek solitude. Know of God's quiet presence.

Holy Saturday ..... Matthew 27: 61

Primed For The Dawn

"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb."

Lent is ending, my crucified Lord, on this day of waiting. The time of sorrow is fading, the dawn of Easter beckons. This Saturday is the day of the time-in-between, a symbol of each day of my life. Your body is in the tomb, but the explosion of joy is being primed for the dawn. The hope of tomorrow is quietly building within. The evidence of death is all too apparent, but the final chapter is a heartbeat away. And so I will sit this day with Mary and Mary. Our lips quiver in grief ...

... still, I can't help but occasionally suppress a smile. Amen.

This Holy Saturday, smile. You know about tomorrow.

THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

Easter Sunday! ..... Matthew 27:66

A Secure Tomb?

"So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone."

You are risen, Lord! Risen indeed! Finally, after these long days of waiting we are led to a tomb that was meant to hold you fast in death's security. But it is broken. Now, in *this* day, break apart the security of death's grip in our life. Now, in *this* day, tear asunder the chilly embrace of evil on our world. Now, in *this* day, unshackle us from past sins and terrors. For now, on *this* day, you are risen. Risen indeed! And *all* our days will be made secure in you. Amen. Hallelujah!

On this Easter Day, celebrate your freedom in Christ.

Forty Days To Calvary—Prayers and Scripture Readings for Lent was written by Rev. Donald Hinchey with cover art by Sally Beck, and is published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. 1-800-325-9414. ©Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. LG-7

SAFE
PASSAGE
A Lenten Journal For Teenagers

Welcome Aboard!

Our Lenten Journey

I once had a geometry teacher, an eccentric old gent, who had us all imagining that his classroom was a huge sailing vessel. As we entered through the doorway on the first day of class, he greeted us with a hearty "Welcome aboard," and then bid us, one by one, to sit on either the port or the starboard side of the room. He was, he reminded us, at the helm of our ship (the chalkboard). Ne'er-do-wells and rogues were sent either to the poop deck (the back of class) or the brig (the principal's office). The rest of us? Well, we were the crew, of course, working together to batten down the hatches and swab the deck. "We are," Mr. Otterstein announced (that was his name, Mr. Otterstein), "on a geometric journey."

I am still amazed that old Mr. Otterstein was able to keep the act up all year long. When a new theorem or axiom was being introduced, he would announce that an island had been spotted ahead. "Perhaps we should explore." When a student didn't understand some important information, he would announce, "It appears that we have lost a few men overboard. Perhaps we should circle around and pick them up." "Rough waters ahead" was his quaint little nautical way of announcing a test. The entire week before the class was finished Mr. Otterstein kept repeating that we were returning to port and that the gangplank would soon be lowered. "All ashore that's going ashore" was his final word to us as we disembarked.

Of all the phrases that Mr. Otterstein used on our long and arduous "geometric journey," one sticks in my mind as being especially comforting. "Safe Passage," he would say. "Safe Passage." Now, I know what "Safe Passage" means as well as you do. "Safe Passage" means that the boat isn't going to sink, or get attacked, or incur any other sort of tragedy. But when Mr. Otterstein said it, it meant something different entirely. Because, after all, we weren't really on a boat. Theorems weren't really interesting ports of call. Tardy students weren't really pirates. We were in a classroom. And we were studying a subject that none of us truly understood when we first boarded that big old boat. We were students who had to pass a difficult class. And "Safe Passage" was Mr. Otterstein's way of reminding us that nobody in that class was going to drown. We were in this together. And he was going to make sure that we would all pass. "Safe Passage" meant that we were all going to make it through this. And, since he was the one handing out the grades, coming from him, "Safe Passage" was pretty reassuring.

I'm coming to a point.

When Jesus turned toward Jerusalem, he announced to his disciples that "The Son of

Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed ..." (Mark 9:22). Rough waters? That sounds like a regular hurricane! Rejection? Murder? Up until this point it had been pretty smooth sailing for Jesus and the disciples—healings, crowds, miracles, fame. But when Jesus announced that they were heading for Jerusalem and that things were going to get sticky ... well ... if I were in the disciples' shoes, I would have started wondering where Jesus was planning on steering us!

Then again ...

I suppose I really AM in the disciples' shoes! We all are. On this, our Lenten journey, we are all sailing along to Jerusalem, where the waters will get choppy, and then stormy, and then downright deadly. This is turning out to be no simple pleasure cruise. This boat is destined to sink! And all hands are going down with the ship!

But ...

I failed to finish Jesus' thought, set forth there in the ninth chapter of Mark's Gospel. "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed ... **and on the third day BE RAISED TO LIFE!**" (Mark 9:22).

"SAFE PASSAGE!" Jesus cried to those disciples that day (and to us as well). "SAFE PASSAGE!" Sure, the ship may get battered around, and we may get bloodied up a bit—a nail hole here and there, and perhaps the scar left by a spear— but "this is the Captain speaking, and I am promising you a SAFE PASSAGE! We'll make it through all of this. And we're going to end up in the most beautiful harbor you've ever seen!"

Now, it may be necessary for me to remind you who is making all of these promises, just in case you forgot. Our Captain on this trip is Jesus Christ—the Son of God and the Ruler of the universe—who sits, even as we speak, in glorious, heavenly splendor. He's also the judge who will one day return and put all things under his feet. And since he's the one handing out the grades, coming from him, "SAFE PASSAGE" may be the most wonderful phrase any of us will ever hear!

But, enough of my yakkin'. This book, like so much technology these days, is fully interactive. I hope you feel free to write in it, underline it ... you can even make paper airplanes out of it if you want (although paper boats may be more appropriate). Consider this your log on this, your Lenten journey. But remember, it's only the log of the first mate. Our Captain already has his log completed. And its final entry is a simple phrase—"SAFE PASSAGE!"

This is my book—a Lenten Log, if you will—begun on the ___ day of _____, in the year _____. Yet even now I do not write alone. Lord, guide my thoughts, my pen, my life.

Signed, _____.

A Successful Launch

Your Voyage Began Long Ago

I have in my possession an article of immeasurable value. Typed onto a piece of rapidly aging paper, folded away and fastened with brittle tape into my Baby Book is a letter that is perhaps more important to me than any other piece of written matter on this earth. The letter is an original (although a carbon copy was once made and has since passed out of existence), and begins with the words, "I wanted to commit this to paper while the thoughts are still fresh in my mind." They are the words of my father, who began and finished this very letter on the day of my birth, March 29, 1965. The letter, single spaced on both sides of a sheet of paper, is addressed to my grandparents, and is a simple, sometimes humorous, often hectic, always tender account of the events surrounding my birth.

It was a Monday. The car wouldn't start, so a car was borrowed—a convertible Chevy with a broken speedometer. The doctor had a polaroid camera and he himself took a picture of Dad, Mom and little me immediately after the birth. My exact weight and height were recorded (although I believe height is referred to as "length" at that young age—when does a baby go from being long to being tall, anyway?). I was even described—Dad said I looked like the actor Edward G. Robinson (and if you know who that is, you will recognize what a hideous insult my father's comment was).

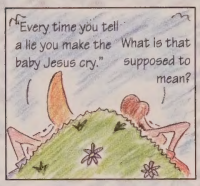
Every time I take out that old letter and read through it (and I do so at least once a year, usually around my birthday), I am amazed by how new it seems to me. I've inevitably forgotten many of the circumstances surrounding my birth, even in the short span of a year. You see, although I was there, I don't actually remember a single thing about that most momentous occasion in my life. I must rely on the firsthand description of others. My father's letter to my grandparents is valuable to me for that very reason—it reminds me that someone was there, keeping track, remembering interesting tidbits, cherishing the whole event and recording it for the future.

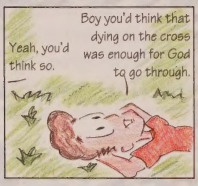
Do you know much about your birth? Do you have a letter (or some other written or recorded document) similar to mine?

Even if you do, use the space on the following page to record what happened on the day of your birth. Perhaps your parents can be of some assistance. Perhaps you can even have one or both of them write the events of that most momentous of days.

It may be that the information is difficult to come by—perhaps lost forever. If that is so, don't worry too much about it. God was there. God remembers.

John Tree, 16





S.O.S.

Surrounded by Sin, And Sinking Fast

I probably don't have to make much of a case for the presence of **sin** in the world. We're surrounded by reminders that this planet is no idyllic paradise—that something has gone terribly wrong with God's initial intentions for us and the world.

I can start by looking inside of myself. I am no stranger to the icy breath of jealousy, the fire of anger, the heat of lust, the grip of greed. My nightly prayers are about half confession, half everything else.

And I can look outside of myself, at the ties that bind me to those whom I love, and see how these same passions work to undermine our relationships—how jealousy undermines family ties, how self-righteousness eats at the trust that connects me to my wife, how greed separates me from those around me.

When my gaze stretches out even beyond my own relationships to the world around me, I can see even more sin. TV is filled with violence and lust. Schoolyards abound with plain old meanness. Sin surrounds us.

Want proof? Just look in any magazine! Come to think of it, that's not a bad idea!

Gather together a few magazines that you can cut up, and make a "Sin Collage." Find a picture of an angry person—cut it out and paste it down. Find greed—do the same. War? Snip it! Envy? Paste it! Lust? Staple, tape or rubber-cement it!

Then, with a marker (or clipped type) label the pictures in the collage. See lust, label lust. See war, label war.

Be artistic. And be ready to use what you learn from making this collage in your daily life. Learn to identify sin—within you, and around you.

Ketchup & Christ

Into Sin's Storm, Christ Comes

I would like very much to meet the inventor of the squeeze ketchup bottle. Over the past several years, ever since the squeeze ketchup bottle and I were first introduced, it has become a sort of quest to find said inventor—he has, for all intents and purposes, become my Holy Grail. Now don't get me wrong. This has not become some dark, soul-encompassing obsession of mine. It doesn't occupy my every waking thought. Nor does it dissuade me from my daily responsibilities. And yet, I must say that the idea of meeting him (or her) lurks in the darker corners of my brain and recurs to my conscious mind at the most unpredictable times—say during the writing of a teenage Lenten journal, for example. In all honesty, I don't even know what I will do if ever I happen to meet "Squeeze Ketchup Man," because I have such mixed feelings toward him. I don't know whether I should shake his hand in congratulations for a brilliant invention, or slap him silly for not coming up with it earlier. I mean really—ketchup and squeeze bottles should have been invented at the exact same moment. They require one another. The Chinese didn't come up with Yin, and then, several decades later invent Yang. Can you even imagine how much time the collective human race has wasted waiting for ketchup to ooze out of a glass bottle? What was this guy thinking, holding out on us for so long? Congratulations? I don't think so! This guy needs a firm kick in the pants! "Slacker! Be a little quicker next time, squeeze boy!"

All of this having been said, I am finally coming to a point.

I don't know whether to feel upset with old King Ahaz, or to thank him. I am, of course, referring to the Ahaz, son of Jotham, found in Isaiah 7. If you're a little lost, why not read it right now—I'll wait (just verses 1 through 18 should do fine)...

... There, finished?

As I was saying, I don't know whether to feel upset with old King Ahaz, or to thank him. On the one hand, he was being what we in the most intellectual circles refer to as a big jerk. Okay, he was in a bit of a pickle, and that makes even the best of us a little testy. And I suppose that I, too, would tend to get edgy if I knew that two fairly powerful kings were flipping a coin to find out which of them gets to be the first one to try out his new battering ram on my city walls. Individually, neither King Pekah nor King Rezin could have made much of a dent in the strong mountain fortress of Jerusalem. But together ... well, let's just say that all bets were off. Which explains why Ahaz was up on the walls of Jerusalem, nervously inspecting his defenses when old Isaiah came trotting along with some news that was, quite honestly, too good to be true. He had a lot to say about

the head of Ephraim and the head of Samaria and smoldering ashes and all. To cut to the chase, Isaiah's message to Ahaz was simply paraphrased by Bobby McFerrin several millennia later—"Don't worry, be happy now!" Actually, Isaiah may not have been what we in the communication field call an opinion leader. He was prone to some pretty crazy stunts—like running around naked, and cutting off his hair with a sword. Let's face it, taking his word for it would be like getting all your news from MTV. But, and this is what gets my goat about Ahaz, it wasn't Isaiah's word to be taken—it was God's word. Isaiah was very clear about this fact! "Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says:" Isaiah said before he even began, and then, when the message was delivered, followed it up with something that even a post-enlightenment guy like myself really appreciates—PROOF! "I realize that this may be too good to believe—so, God has agreed to prove it with a SIGN. Pick one—any sign at all. God will seal this promise with anything you choose."

... But Ahaz snubbed him—not only Isaiah, but the Almighty God! Snubbed him right to his face! By turning down God's sign, Ahaz was really turning down God's help. "I can get myself out of this one just fine, Isaiah, so why don't you and your sign-giving God just get the heck out of Dodge? Oh, and don't call us, we'll call you."

God gave Ahaz a sign anyway—and a pretty good one, too. "Listen," God said, "a woman will have a baby, and by the time that the kid is a couple of years old (eating curds and honey—hey, that's cheesecake!) the two kings that you're so worried about won't even exist anymore! Oh, and the kid's name—'I'm Here!' God is with us. Immanuel."

Ahaz rejected God's word and God's sign. And for that I would like to slap old Ahaz silly. But, in a way, I suppose I owe Ahaz a vote of thanks too. Because, you know, God doesn't back out on promises. Nope, sometimes he just hangs them up for future use. "Some day," God thought, "I'll haul that unredeemed promise out of moth balls. Then I'll show them—not just Ahaz, but all of them. I'll show them that I'm the one who will help them win their battles. I'll show them that I'm around—close enough to touch, and heal and speak—and breathe a tiny baby's breath. I'll fulfill that old, dusty promise one day!"

... And when the time had fully come, St. Paul writes to us, that's exactly what God did!

Draw some signs that remind you that God is active and involved in the world ... in your life:

Rabbi

Jesus Came To Teach

How do you think of Jesus—as a friend, as an adult, as the Son of God, as a wise old fellow? When you imagine what he looks like, where do you normally place him—in a manger as a baby, hanging on a cross, breaking bread at the Last Supper, healing a blind man?

Those closest to Jesus, his disciples, called him *teacher*. They actually called him *Rabbi* or *Rabboni*, but they both mean *teacher*.

I'm not sure that I often think of Jesus in those terms, but that's what he was. He was a teacher—that was his profession. Through the parables and sermons written in the Gospels, Jesus is still a teacher—our Teacher.

I wonder what sort of classroom Jesus would run if he were around today.

I'm willing to bet that he would be the kind of teacher that would conduct class outdoors. He was famous for teaching outdoors, in natural settings. By the shores of Lake Galilee, on a hillside, in the outer portico of the temple, out in the fields of grain—Jesus always seemed to be outside when he taught. If he were to teach at your school, I bet he'd take you on lots of field trips.

I also bet that Jesus would have a lot of "story times." That tended to be his favorite method of teaching. And his stories were usually taken right out of real life. He spoke to shepherds, farmers and fishermen about herding sheep, planting fields, and catching fish—always using their everyday images and terminology to explain heavenly things.

If Jesus were to come to your classroom, in this day and age, how do you suppose his parables would reflect our way of life?

I think that rather than talking about kings he might talk about heads of industry, CEOs or the manager at McDonald's. Instead of shepherds, he might talk about ranchers or dog breeders. Whatever he talked about, I'm certain that it would be said in a way that we could all identify with.

Take one of your favorite parables and re-write it as though Jesus were telling it today. Try to cover all the points of the parable, plugging it into our day and age. Would the parable of the Lost Sheep become the parable of the mother of ten children who lost one in the mall? Would the parable of the Good Samaritan become the parable of the Communist who helped the man who had been mugged in Central Park?

Rescued!

Jesus Came to Guide

Despite the presence of sin in the world, and despite the rolling waves of doubt that can so often make us cry out "does anybody care?!" the good news of Lent is that we are not alone. Jesus came not only to obliterate the guilt of sin (as if that weren't enough) but to be an ever-present help in time of need—not only to subdue the typhoon of death, but, as in Mark 4:35-41, to help us manage the tiny squalls and storms that arise every day of our lives.

"Don't You care?" they asked, a prayer I've prayed as well,
especially when the storms of life arose
and in the weakness of my faith,
I felt You were asleep somewhere—
Well, not "asleep" exactly; dare I call it "unconcerned"?—
and it was up to me, all by myself, to steer my course
through ways uncharted, waves arising:
"Don't You care?"

"They took Him with them in the boat, just as He was," it says.
What does that mean, "just as He was"?
Does it mean *human*, therefore *tired* enough
to want to catch a little nap,
the way I tire sometimes?
Or does it mean, somehow, that even tired
You were (and are!) the Son of God,
not unconcerned but in control,
and caring most of all
that *faith* should grow
and find its source—and object—
even there in *YOU*?

"They took Him with them in the boat"—
that's the secret, isn't it?
No matter what You *seem* to be
(they even asked, "Who is this, then?")
in my small boat, wind-driven and wave-tossed,
Lord, You are here, with me!
How dare I ask, "Lord, don't you care?"
when I have seen Your care made manifest at Calvary
when waves of sin and death arose to drown the world

(and me as well, as though I had to chart my course
through *that* great storm all by myself),
and at the open tomb I knew that You, untired, had said again
to every wave, and now the greatest of them all,
"Peace! Be still!"

Say that to me, my Lord,
when winds of contradicting doubt would fill my lungs
and have me question Your divine concern
or when I just grow weary, human as I am.
I know You care!
Though weak my faith, I see You in the boat with me!
So calm my stormy attitude; make even me obey
Your voice so all-commanding and so near:
"Peace! Be still!"

—Arden W. Mead

What was the worst storm of your life? Write about it below, only write about it in prayer form, allowing even the memory of that difficult time to be guided and captained by God.

—My Captain In The Storm—

Port of Call: Golgotha

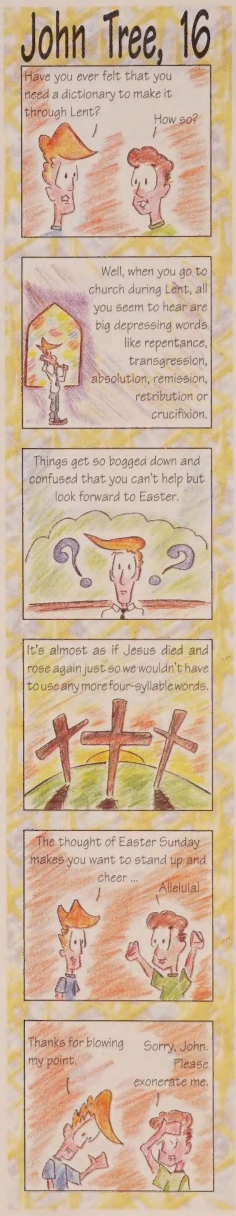
Jesus Came to Save!

The short, fast, dramatic way in which Mark crafted his Gospel lends a sense of immediacy to Jesus' hasty trial and grisly execution. Things happen so fast in Mark's account that we are barely able to react to the unjust craziness of such an innocent man being found guilty—when suddenly Jesus is already dead. It is as though we are witnessing, even as we read, a terrible accident—a train wreck of sorts. One minute everything is in its proper order. The next minute we are surrounded by carnage and destruction. I imagine that what we feel as we read Mark's Gospel is similar to what family members feel when they get that awful phone call informing them that there is a body to be identified at the morgue. One minute, life; the next, emptiness.

But what Mark has written is more than simply a quick-tempoed narrative. It is masterful. I like to compare Mark's passion to the winding of a watch spring. Beginning in Mark 15:16, we are introduced to a cast of characters. Jesus is there, of course. Joining him are the soldiers, who abuse and mock him, and Simon of Cyrene, an innocent man who is forced into the humiliating task of carrying the cross. There are passersby—ordinary citizens, we are led to believe, who are wagging their heads and deriding Jesus. They are joined by the chief priests and the scribes, who join in the mocking chorus. Even the two bandits who are crucified on either side of Jesus taunt him. One final blow is delivered—the person who offers Jesus a drink of sour wine holds it back for an instant to chide, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Sentence by sentence, insult by humiliating insult, the watch spring is wound.

And then it snaps. At the apex of action—the climax of the tale—Jesus cries aloud and breathes his last. At that point everything reverses—and at lightning speed. It is as though all history turns on this moment. The insults of the religious leaders are met with the tearing of the temple curtain. The chiding onlookers go quietly away. Pilate, who had washed his hands of Jesus, involves himself again, and provides for the proper burial of the body. And the mocking soldiers? Their leader, the centurion, declares this man the Son of God. Only one group remains unchanged. The women, followers of their slain Messiah, continue their mournful watch at a distance ... in silence.

Read chapter fifteen of Mark's Gospel paying special attention to the characters that wander in and out of the story. Then, take upon yourself the role of one of those characters, and use the following page to write, from that person's perspective, a diary entry that reflects the events of that day. Use this opportunity to enter into the dramatic events of Good Friday—to experience them firsthand. Everyone *was* changed that day ... and that includes YOU!



Alleluia!

Safe Passage

He made it! Jesus made it!

He made it through that awful trial. He made it through the mockery and the pain. He made it all the way through death, carrying the weight of the world's sin (your sin ... and mine, too) on his shoulders. And he made it out the other side.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves, once and for all, that God is gracious, forgiving, and abounding in love! God doesn't want death for his children. Want proof? Well, there he is! One of God's children, verified dead (the spear mark proves it), buried in a sealed tomb. And he's walking around and feeling fine, thank you very much!

Jesus, you just defeated the power of sin, death and the devil! What are you going to do now?

"Why, I'm going to lead the way for every child of God—through life's rough seas, through death's doors, and on to life everlasting!"

SAFE PASSAGE! He made it! He's calling us through the storm of life and the darkness of death. He's calling us from the other side. He's beckoning us to follow. And he's making a promise about the journey ...

... "SAFE PASSAGE!"

Rites of Passage

If you enjoyed the devotions and activities in this book, you will certainly enjoy ***"Rites of Passage,"*** a much larger devotion book that uses activities, journaling, stories, poetry, cartoons and devotions to lead teenagers to a deeper understanding of the ways that God is involved in the world ... and in their lives. One hundred pages. Cost is only **$6.99** each. Simply call 1-800-325-9414 and ask for product **CN-2**.

Safe Passage—A Lenten Journal for Teenagers was written by Peter J. Mead with cover art by Sally Beck and cartoons by David Mead. © 1996 Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. Phone: 1-800-325-9414. Printed in the U.S.A. **CN-3**

IN THE CROSS of CHRIST I GLORY

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
(SERIES A)

Melody ..... *Rathbun 87 87*

P God forbid that I should glory, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C In him is forgiveness, life, and resurrection from the dead. By him we are redeemed and set at liberty.

L *Remember, O Lord, your kindness and your constant love, which you have shown from long ago.*

In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

L *Remember, O Lord, your kindness and your constant love, which you have shown from long ago.*

C **God forbid that I should glory, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

P "Yet even now," says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts, and not your garments." (Joel 2:12-13)

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the Cross forsake me;
Lo, it glows with peace and joy.

P The Lord remembers us and will bless us. He will bless all who fear him, the great and the small alike. (Psalm 115:12-13)

C **In him is forgiveness, life, and resurrection from the dead.**

L *Remember, O Lord, your kindness and your constant love, which you have shown from long ago.*

When the sun of bliss is shining
Light and love upon my way,
From the Cross the radiance streaming
Adds more luster to the day.

P Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a Cross. (Phil. 2:8)

C **By him we are redeemed and set at liberty.**

L *Remember, O Lord, your kindness and your constant love, which you have shown from long ago.*

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the Cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

"In The Cross Of Christ I Glory" Lenten Litanies are written by Arden W. Mead to the hymn by John Bowring. They are published in six parts by **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Phone: 1-800-325-9414. Art by Sally Beck. Copyright © 1996. Printed in the U.S.A.

Friday, March 22
"Father, forgive them" ..... Luke 23:33-34
Saturday, March 23
As far as east from west ..... Psalm 103:1-13

OH, LET ME FROM THIS DAY

Monday, March 25
Today, hear his voice ..... Hebrews 3:7-15
Tuesday, March 26
God's day has dawned ..... Romans 13:11-14
Wednesday, March 27
The day the Lord has made ..... Psalm 118:19-24
Thursday, March 28
Today salvation has come ..... Luke 19:1-10
Friday, March 29
The day of salvation ..... 2 Corinthians 5:16—6:2
Saturday, March 30
The day for which we waited ..... Isaiah 25:6-9

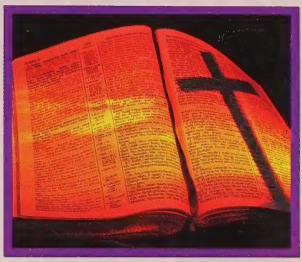
BE WHOLLY THINE

Monday, April 1
No longer outsiders ..... Ephesians 2:13-22
Tuesday, April 2
We are God's children ..... 1 John 3:1-3
Wednesday, April 3
God's chosen people ..... 1 Peter 2:4-10
Maundy Thursday, April 4
The communion of saints ..... Ephesians 4:1-7
Good Friday, April 5
Graven on his hands ..... Isaiah 49:13-16
Holy Saturday, April 6
We are the Lord's ..... Romans 14:7-9

AMEN

Easter Sunday, April 7
With the Lord forever ..... 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Compiled by Arden W. Mead. © Copyright 1996 by **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Road. Phone: 1-800-325-9414. Photo by Roger M. Smith/Vision Impact Photography. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.
BF-8



MY FAITH *looks* TO THEE

Daily Bible Readings for Lent

—1996—

But as for me, I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. —Micah 7:7

The faith expressed by God's ancient prophet finds poetic voice in the hymn stanza that is the theme for this series of readings.

A week at a time—a line at a time—a day at a time—the season of Lent urges us to look in faith at our divine Savior, to speak to him in prayer and receive the forgiveness offered in his innocent suffering and death, so that we might be his own dear children, now and forever.

As you look up each day's Bible reading ... look up ... to Calvary!

MY FAITH *looks* TO THEE

Daily Bible Readings for Lent

—1996—

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior Divine!
Now hear me while I pray,
Take all my guilt away,
Oh, let me from this day
Be wholly Thine!

MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE

Ash Wednesday, February 21
I lift up my eyes ..... Psalm 121:1-8

Thursday, February 22
Look up and live ..... Numbers 21:5-9

Friday, February 23
Redemption drawing near ..... Luke 21:25-28

Saturday, February 24
Look to Jesus ..... Hebrews 12:1-2

THOU LAMB OF CALVARY

Monday, February 26
A substitute sacrifice ..... Genesis 22:1-14

Tuesday, February 27
The Passover lamb ..... Exodus 12:1-13

Wednesday, February 28
The Lamb of God ..... John 1:29-36

Thursday, February 29
Like a lamb to the slaughter ..... Isaiah 53:4-7

Friday, March 1
His blood our ransom ..... 1 Peter 1:18-21

Saturday, March 2
The Lamb who was slain ..... Revelation 5:6-14

SAVIOR DIVINE

Monday, March 4
He will save his people ..... Matthew 1:18-23

Tuesday, March 5
That the world might be saved ..... John 3:13-17

Wednesday, March 6
Christ came to save sinners ..... 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Thursday, March 7
Salvation in no other name ..... Acts 4:8-12

Friday, March 8
Surely God is my salvation ..... Isaiah 12:1-6

Saturday, March 9
Await our heavenly Savior ..... Philippians 3:20-21

NOW HEAR ME WHILE I PRAY

Monday, March 11
The prayer of the righteous ..... James 5:13-16

Tuesday, March 12
A persistent prayer ..... Matthew 15:21-28

Wednesday, March 13
Ask ... seek ... knock ..... Luke 11:1-13

Thursday, March 14
Pray and don't lose heart ..... Luke 18:1-8

Friday, March 15
"Jesus, remember me" ..... Luke 23:39-46

Saturday, March 16
Pray to your Father ..... Matthew 6:5-8

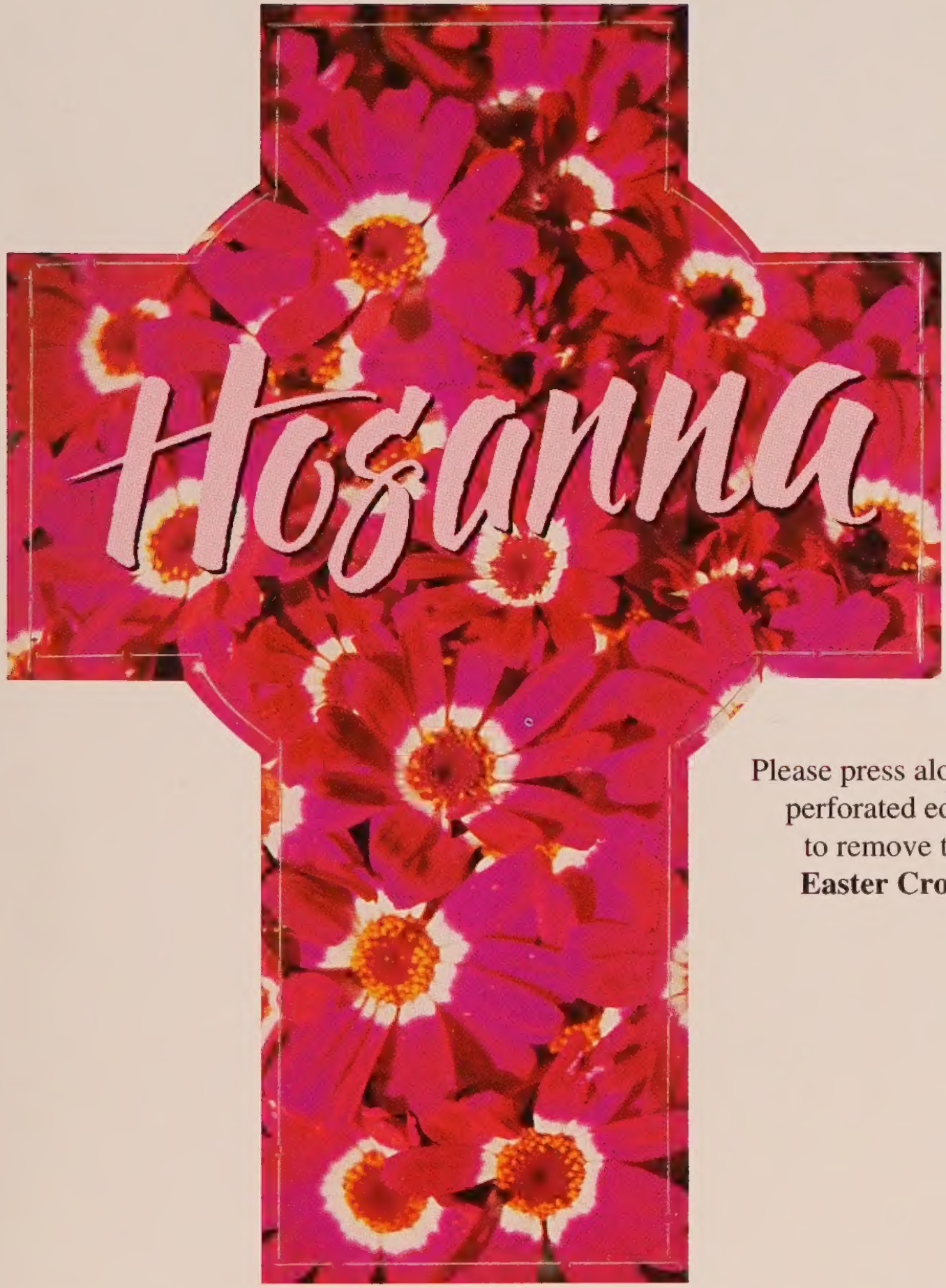
TAKE ALL MY GUILT AWAY

Monday, March 18
Have mercy on me, O God ..... Psalm 51:1-12

Tuesday, March 19
"Your sins are forgiven" ..... Mark 2:1-12

Wednesday, March 20
There is forgiveness with you ..... Psalm 130:1-8

Thursday, March 21
As we forgive those ... . Matthew 6:9-15



Please press along the perforated edges to remove the **Easter Cross.**

©Copyright 1996 by **Creative Communications for the Parish**. Photo by King Schoenfeld. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. **EC-H**

A Lenten Prayer

LORD JESUS CHRIST, by your passion, death and resurrection you have set us free from sin and death. May your grace renew our hearts this Lent and help us turn from sin in our own lives. May we learn to appreciate more deeply the sacrifice you made for us. Accept our prayer, fasting and acts of charity as we seek to draw closer to you during this holy season. Strengthen the faith of your people so that we may be a sign of your love to all the world. Amen.

© 1996 Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127.
Cover photo by James E. Adams. Printed in the U.S.A. **PK-T**

LENT

Lent, from the Anglo-Saxon *lencten*, means springtime. The season lasts from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week. Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Saturday's Easter Vigil form the core of the Church Year, sometimes called the Paschal *Triduum*.

The Terms

Holy Week is a general term for the days from Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday.

Palm or Passion Sunday received its contrasting names from the day's Gospel—Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem leads to his passion and crucifixion.

Maundy Thursday gets its name from Jesus' "new *commandment*" to "love one another," spoken at his Last Supper where he washed the disciples' feet.

Good Friday marks Jesus' trial, crucifixion and death. It is often observed with a three-hour *(Tre Ore)* service.

Easter Vigil is celebrated on Holy Saturday evening after sundown prior to Easter Sunday. Historically it is a time for baptizing and receiving new members, relighting the Paschal Candle and celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Easter Sunday is celebrated with joy. The message *"He is risen indeed!"* turns the events of Holy Week and the story of our own lives into a victory. This day initiates the Easter season's 50 days.

Paschal is a term for Easter borrowed from the Jewish Passover. As the Jews celebrated God's rescue of his people from slavery, so Christians celebrate their liberation from sin's bondage through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

The Season

Lent is the Church's "springtime." Out of the darkness of sin's winter emerges a people—the Church—reborn in their Lord's resurrection.

Easter is the oldest Christian season. The observance of Lent first appeared between 200-300 A.D. Lent was a time of preparation for persons being instructed in the Christian faith before their baptism. Following the model of Jesus' time in the wilderness, new adult converts practiced Lenten penance and prayer for 40 days, waiting to receive their baptism, confirmation and first Lord's Supper at the Easter vigil.

Today Lent calls us to look back on the impact of our baptism on our lives. How are we doing, we who have died to sin and come alive to new life in Christ? In repentance we ask our Lord to clear our lives of sin.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday's repentance and leads us to Holy Week's bitter story and Easter's joy.

These 40 days (excluding Sundays) are the first half of a larger rainbow arch. The other half includes the Easter season's 50 days in which we celebrate our baptismal rebirth in Christ. The celebration continues in the Church Year—every Sunday is a "little Easter."

The Symbols

Colors: The usual color for Lent is violet, signaling repentance. Black may be seen on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, red on Palm or Passion Sunday. Easter's color is white for purity.

Ashes: Lent may begin with a cross-shaped smudge received on our foreheads in the Ash Wednesday service, a solemn, public reminder of our mortality and repentance.

The 40 days of Lent are a time of self-denial and preparation, patterned after Jesus' retreat into the wilderness before his 3-year ministry.

Palms were an ancient Jewish and Roman symbol of victory, used in triumphal processions and for decoration.

Crown of thorns: Like the cross itself, Jesus' painful crown is a sign both of his humiliation on our behalf as well his kingship.

Darkness; uncovered altar: Some churches leave their interior dark and the chancel furniture bare between Thursday or Friday and Easter to symbolize the death of our Lord.

Easter or Paschal Candle: This symbol of our risen Savior, the Light of the world, may be lit for the first time at the Easter Vigil and at regular services throughout the following year.

The Scriptures

The Sunday Scripture readings for Lent are a grand panorama, presenting a sweeping view of salvation history from the fall of humankind to the preaching of the apostles. We hear that—

- Sin enters the world by one man and is conquered by Another
- People of God through the centuries live by faith
- The Lord reaches out to those living in spiritual and physical need
- The Lord raises the dead, giving hope to the living
- The mind of the Lord is that of a servant
- The Lord does mighty acts to save his people
- The Suffering Servant is our High Priest
- Jesus lives and gives life to all

The **Old Testament readings** include the greatest events from Genesis and Exodus, as well as memorable quotes from the prophets, especially Isaiah. The **Epistle readings** feature the letters of Paul, the great theologian who did so much to relate the Old Testament acts of God to the New Testament life of Jesus. The **Gospel readings** during Holy Week's special services are rich with striking details, including the entire record of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. Listen each Sunday for the great news that relates that day's Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel readings.

Daily Readings

The following selections help us relive most of Jesus' ministry by reading through Luke's Gospel. At week's end we pause to listen to the prophet, Isaiah. On Mondays a Psalm sings to us the centuries-long story of God's love and frustration, a struggle resolved through his suffering servant.

Ash Wed. ..... Luke 3:1-9
Thursday ..... Luke 3:15-22
Friday ..... Luke 4:1-13
Saturday ..... Isaiah 42:1-9

First Sun. ..... Psalm 51
Monday ..... Luke 4:14-30
Tuesday ..... Luke 4:31-44
Wednesday ..... Luke 5:1-16
Thursday ..... Luke 5:17-39
Friday ..... Luke 6:1-16
Saturday ..... Isaiah 40:1-11

Second Sun. ..... Psalm 105
Monday ..... Luke 6:17-49
Tuesday ..... Luke 7:1-35
Wednesday ..... Luke 7:36-50
Thursday ..... Luke 8:1-21
Friday ..... Luke 8:22-56
Saturday ..... Isaiah 65:17-25

Third Sun. ..... Psalm 107
Monday ..... Luke 9:1-17
Tuesday ..... Luke 9:18-36
Wednesday ..... Luke 10:1-24
Thursday ..... Luke 11:1-13
Friday ..... Luke 11:29-54
Saturday ..... Isaiah 60:1-5

Fourth Sun. ..... Psalm 103
Monday ..... Luke 12:1-12, 22-34
Tuesday ..... Luke 12:35-59
Wednesday ..... Luke 13:10-35
Thursday ..... Luke 14
Friday ..... Luke 15
Saturday ..... Isaiah 11:1-5

Fifth Sun. ..... Psalm 22
Monday ..... Luke 16:19-17:10
Tuesday ..... Luke 17:22-37
Wednesday ..... Luke 18:1-17
Thursday ..... Luke 18:18-34
Friday ..... Luke 18:35-19:10
Saturday ..... Isaiah 61

Palm Sun. ..... Luke 19:28-44
Monday ..... Luke 19:45-20:19
Tuesday ..... Luke 20:45-21:19
Wednesday ..... Luke 21:20-38
Maundy Th. ..... Luke 22:1-65
Good Fri. ..... Luke 22:66-23:56
Holy Sat. ..... Isaiah 53

Easter Sun. ..... Luke 24

CHRISTIAN HISTORY INSTITUTE'S #25

Glimpses of people, events, life and faith from the Church Across the Ages

Children: Early Church

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS EDITION

Jesus Taught the Early Church to Love Children

A marble statue of Jesus in Rome from the Early Church era. Jesus was seen as the Good Shepherd, lovingly caring for his little lambs.

With this issue we begin a six part series on the church and children. Issues 25-30 will be devoted to this theme.

THE FAMILIAR New Testament picture of Jesus taking a child in his arms and receiving him with love portrays an attitude of care and concern for children found nowhere else in the ancient world. Children, along with women, old men, and slaves, were viewed as physically weak burdens on society who had little value to the wider life of the community. In Greece and Rome, it was an accepted practice to abandon unwanted children along the roadsides to die.

Jesus, however, seemed to always find time for youngsters; he told his disciples that unless they became like little children they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. He warned his followers not to despise children or to cause them to stumble. Children were valuable–to be treated with love and care.

Condemning Pagan Practices

Jesus' teachings concerning children were faithfully followed by the early church, which believed that to receive a child in the name of Christ was to receive Christ Himself. Admonitions against the pagan practices of abortion and child abandonment were found in the earliest Christian writings. The Epistle of Barnabas commanded: *Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born. Thou shalt not withdraw thy hand from thy son, or from thy daughter, but from their infancy thou shalt teach them the fear of the Lord.*

Rescuing Deserted Babies

Christians began collecting infants abandoned by their parents and raised them as their own. If pagans took in such abandoned children, it was most often for immoral purposes. The second century Christian Justin Martyr spoke out against the practice of abandoning children: *As for us, we have been taught that to expose newly-born children is the action of wicked men...We refuse to do this, first, because we see that almost all so exposed - boys as well as girls - are brought up for prostitution. As the ancients are said to have reared herds of oxen, or*

AUGUSTINE AND THE PEAR TREE

There was no reason to steal the pears; he had plenty to eat. There was no reason to throw the pears to the pigs; there was only the sheer delight in doing something wrong. So Augustine in his *Confessions* told of joining his comrades in stealing pears from his neighbor's tree. With great openness and honesty, Augustine looked back on such youthful mischief as evidence of his sinfulness and need of salvation.

goats, or sheep, or grazing horses, so now we see that you rear children for this shameful purpose.

Why was the early Christian attitude toward children so unusual? Simply because it recognized the child as a person. Both children and adults were equal in the kingdom of God. The Christians taught that God cared for children, as well as slaves, women and barbarians, just as much as He did for men. Entrance into the kingdom of God did not depend on wealth, status, learning, or personal merit. Therefore, salvation was open to children as much as to adults.

No Sunday Schools Yet

Although children were accepted as part of the early church, there were no Christian educational programs for children. There were classes for catechumens or those wishing to join the church, but no specific classes or schools for children. In part this was due to the poverty of the early church and the persecution the church endured for the first centuries. And there was the conviction that such training was primarily the responsibility of the parents. Several church leaders addressed letters or sermons to parents instructing them in the proper Christian training of their children.

Untamed Creatures

In the fourth century John Chrysostom wrote *The Right Way for Parents to Bring up Their Children* stating that children were untamed wild creatures who needed many restraints to bridle their unruly natures. Parents, he said, should be more concerned about training a child's soul in virtue than educating him in literature or the arts. Chrysostom told parents that: *If good precepts are impressed on the soul while it is yet tender, no man will be able to destroy them when they have set firm.*

Dyed in the Wool Creatures

St. Jerome in his letters of advice to friends on the bringing up of their children also emphasized the importance of the early training of children. He believed that a child's early impressions were not easily erased. "You cannot take the dye from wool that has been dyed," he said.

Tracing God's Hand

But perhaps the early church leader whose writings most revealed the importance of childhood was St. Augustine. His *Confessions* was an autobiographical account of his early life and conversion at the age of thirty-three. It has been heralded as the first book to take childhood seriously. Augustine unabashedly told of his boyhood pranks, his distaste for his studies, his love for play, and his fits of temper. Yet, through all of his childhood mischief and a licentious youth, Augustine traced God's hand continuously at work drawing him to Himself. God's grace was as much concerned with a little child as with a mature adult. Augustine would have heartily agreed with the familiar Sunday school song "Jesus Loves the Little Children," for he had experienced God's love and care in his childhood.

Suggestions

Have you ever reflected upon the traces of God's leading and care in your own childhood? If you belong to a small group, consider making the subject area the basis for discussion. Look around at the little children in your church. Can you see in them the saplings of maturity, leadership, healthy Christian adults? Smile at the children who cross your path and see how they respond.

GLIMPSES is published 12 times a year by Christian History Institute, Ken Curtis, Editor, Diana Severance, Writer. © 1996 by Christian History Institute. All rights reserved. This edition published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. (314) 821-1363. X-25

Compiled by Peter J. Mead. © Copyright 1996 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. 1-800-325-9414. Cover art by Sally Beck. Printed in the USA. **GH-3**

+++

Remembering the Departed on Easter

Risen Lord, you fulfilled the law, completely, fully—but you broke everything else! The stranglehold of death—broken! The finality of the grave—shattered! The laws of nature, the harping voice of logic, the curse of sin's wage—toppled and crumbling, all! Alleluia! Now, Lord Christ, blaster of death, break into that last, fortified stronghold and there proclaim the good, good news of life eternal! We saw them die, our loved ones now hidden from our eyes! We marked their graves! We feel the loss! Break into our hearts! Remind us that they, too, live! In your most holy name we pray. Amen.

+++

May the glorious resurrection
of our Lord,
Jesus Christ,
fill you with
courage for today
and
hope for tomorrow.

Parish Occasion Card ***Thank You For Joining Us*** published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127, (800) 325-9414. © Copyright 1995. Cover art by Sally Beck.

As we celebrate the Lord's Presence, we also give thanks for your presence among us. We invite you to return soon.

✢

. . . in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:11

THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

A Series of Special Services for Lent

GOD'S LOVE *breaks* THROUGH

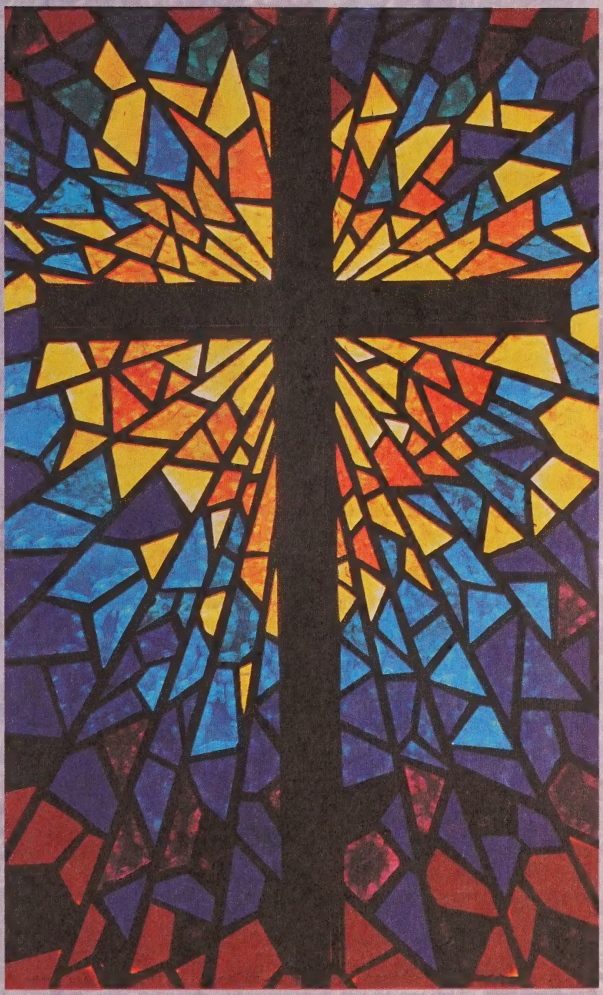
"God uses for his glory those people and things that are most perfectly broken." The sermons in this six-part Lenten series take *brokenness* seriously—both the kinds of brokenness in which human beings find themselves because of sin, and the kind of brokenness which God requires for true repentance. Week by week be assured that

GOD'S LOVE *breaks* THROUGH

- **When Hearts Are Broken Tearfully, God's Love Breaks Through**—based on Ash Wednesday's traditional Psalm 51.
- **When Christian Love and Care Break Forth, God's Love Breaks Through**—as depicted graphically in a bottle of costly ointment broken in Jesus' honor.
- **When Pride Is Shattered Shamefully, God's Love Breaks Through**—as was the case with Peter when the rooster crowed.
- **When Human Strength Cannot Avail, God's Love Breaks Through**—as the disciples demonstrated at Gethsemane.
- **When Other Answers Fail and Fall, God's Love Breaks Through**—as did those attempted by Pontius Pilate and Judas.
- **Where Lives Are Broken Helplessly, God's Love Breaks Through**—as with the two thieves on their crosses.

God's Love Breaks Through was written by Randy Walquist; edited with orders of service by Arden W. Mead; creedal hymn by Peter J. Mead; art by Sally Beck.
Published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Copyright ©1995. Printed in the U.S.A.

WORDS FROM THE CROSS



Our Suffering And Christ's Breakthrough

Lenten Reflections

By Edward H. Schroeder

Words From The Cross

Lent is the time of spiritual renewal for Christians. During these 40 days Christians are urged to pray and to meditate with special intensity and devotion on the Gospel accounts of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Traditionally, the last words (and acts) of Christ from the cross have provided a rich resource for Lenten reflection and prayer. In the following Lenten meditations, the Rev. Dr. Edward H. Schroeder reflects on the words of the dying Jesus that comfort and the words that "afflict." The author explores the many comforting words that promise such incredible gifts as the unbounded mercy, forgiveness, love, and redemption of God. But he also explores the words that "afflict"—words about abandonment, despair, and distrust, words that challenge us to listen, to believe, to seek repentance and healing, to give up the many lies and deceptions that enslave us.

Each daily reflection has a suggested Scripture reading, and each reflection concludes with a brief summary prayer. In addition, readers are invited to spend time in silence after reading each devotion, and to respond with their own prayer, as the Spirit moves them.

Our Suffering And Christ's Breakthrough

Lenten Reflections

by Edward H. Schroeder

Ash Wednesday ..... Mark 15:16-20

Our Thorns And Christ's Breakthrough

After twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him ... Then they led him out to crucify him.
Mark 15:17,20

The best way to begin our 40-day Lenten journey is to look ahead to Easter when Jesus explodes from the tomb and shatters the thorns of life and of death for us. In an evocative pen and ink drawing, artist Siegfried Reinhardt once depicted images of Christ's seven last words from the cross that were all intertwined with a crown of thorns. The crown was broken right at the top, where Jesus stands triumphant over his empty tomb.

That drawing is a rich symbol of Lent, because Lent is about *our* thorns and *Christ's* breakthrough. Lent is "Good News" and not morbid at all. It is the story of a cosmic change of subjects. Our thorns of pain and suffering are linked to Jesus, who is undergoing them all. Then, Christ's Easter life is linked to us. When Lent is over, our thorn-encircled lives have open spaces for new futures.

Our Lenten journey is not really *us* accompanying Jesus on *his* way of sorrows. It's the other way around. *He* walks the brambled path of *our* way of sorrows so that *we* might get to Easter. We accompany him in faith these 40 days so that it can happen to us—again.

Energize us, Lord, for our journey through Lent by the grace that flows from Easter. Give us the Easter-courage to face up to the thorns in our own lives and the thorns we inflict on others. Amen.

Thursday After Ash Wednesday ..... Luke 23:32-38

Forgiveness—What It's All About

Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing. Luke 23:34

Forgiveness is what Jesus is all about. It finally is what life—real life—is all about. But we'd never know that if we took our signals from the messages of daily life that surround us. The recurring theme in daily life is just the opposite: recompense. "There is no free lunch." "You get what you've got coming to you." (Granted, that doesn't always work either. Some get cheated out of their fair shake. Some seem never to get a fair shake at all. Some get much more than their share—and even do so legally!) Nevertheless, recompense, fairness, debit-credit equity, is the melody of life's daily transactions.

Suppose that recompense were God's only melody. What would happen? "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." There would be no life that lasts. But recompense is *not* God's last word. Jesus' first word from the cross is God's last word for sinners: forgiveness. That forgiveness doesn't come cheaply, yet when Christ reappears at Easter, forgiveness is a fact. We can count on it, live on it—in our transactions with God and with one another.

Forgive us our sins, Lord, as we forgive those who sin against us. Sing into our ears the melody of your mercy. Tune our voices to sing the same song to those we know who seldom ever hear it. Amen.

Friday After Ash Wednesday — Matthew 5:43-48

The Thorn Of Our Enemies

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

That's what Jesus says. Our knee-jerk reaction is: "Jesus, you've got to be kidding." When we think of the brutal soldiers who carried out the crucifixion of Jesus, we wonder how he could have loved *them!* We may not face enemies as harsh as those, but our enemies seem vicious enough in their own way. How can we love them?

Love has become an *emotion* in our culture, warm fuzzies in the heart. Not so for Jesus. When he says "love," it is a concrete act of help for someone who needs it, regardless of emotions. Do our enemies need help? Absolutely. And especially at the deepest level of their relation to God. That's the concrete help Jesus invokes for them—for us too. Not because they and we are so lovable, but because we need it. So Jesus' word for enemies is: "Help 'em. I gave *you* concrete help (and how!) here on the cross. Trust me for that and then go and do likewise."

Forgive us, Lord, when our hands harm instead of help, when fear chokes out our faith and trust in you. Increase our faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, and unclench our fists to give concrete help—even to our enemies. Amen.

Saturday After Ash Wednesday — Matthew 7:7-11

Prayer When The Thorns Dig In

How much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Matthew 7:11

"When all else fails, try prayer." That notion may be common in our day, but it's not Christian. Jesus' first word, "Father, forgive..." signals that. It's first of all personal and relational. In his own native tongue his word was "Abba." That's children's language, like daddy or papa in English. "Daddy" designates someone you know and trust, someone who knows you and already has a track record of caring for you.

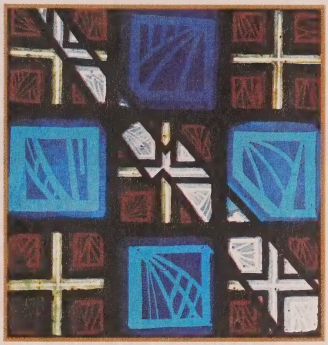
The when-all-else-fails folk ignore that. For them God is not any sort of Abba at all, but the doctor in the heavenly emergency room—if they can only get there in time! That's not praying "in faith." Jesus doesn't pray that way. His first prayer from the cross isn't about himself at all. He asks Abba to become Abba, the forgiving Father, of those who put him there. That finally includes us.

The cross is God at work in his beloved Son to become our Abba again, to restore us to a relationship of trusting child and loving parent. "Giving good things to those who ask," is the way Jesus puts it in Matthew's Gospel. A loving parent is a pretty good thing! Christians pray in faith, trusting that Christ has hooked us orphans back to Abba. The cross affirms: Abba is for us, not against us. So it's not so much God's providence as it is God's promise that is the ground for our praying. Lord, teach us to pray—this way!

Abba, we too confine you to emergency-room status. Help us to focus our hearts on Jesus' prayer for us, so that our prayers to you may proceed in faith, trusting you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lent's Forty Days And Christ's Forty Days Of Temptation

Jesus ... was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.
Luke 4:1-2



There are 6 Sundays *in* Lent, but they are not *part of* the sacred number 40. That number is special in the Bible, and often it designates the time it takes God (or God's agents) to get a job done. For each Lenten Sunday devotion we will explore one of the stories about 40 in the Bible—starting with Jesus.

Jesus' forty days in the wilderness signal the depth of his work of salvation. The prince of the powers of destruction strives to undermine God's rescue operation, to deflect Jesus from the way of the cross. Yet Jesus hangs on to the word of God that sent him on this assignment. The tempter's schemes fail. These forty days are a preview for us that Jesus will get the job done—for us and for our salvation—but it won't be easy.

On this first of the Lenten Sundays we Christians do a "spell-check," examining the wilderness voices that have us spellbound, that coax us to opt out of the way of the cross. Reflect today on the tempting voices that come to our ears—those within our own heart and those from the outside bombarding us in daily life from our secular culture. Coping with temptation is not just saying "no" to the voices that co-opt us. It is re-tuning our receiving sets to the voice of Christ. He stayed tuned to God's own voice as the tempter went after him. His staying power is God's word to empower us to do the same in our own lives.

For these forty days, O Christ, accompany us on our testing. Walk with us through Lent to Easter. Walk beside us in our wildernesses. Mute the voices that distract us from your way of the cross. Re-tune us to your wavelength, to your words that give life and that will never pass away. Amen.

Monday, the First Week of Lent ..... Luke 23:39-43

Paradise Comes To Earth

Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise. Luke 23:43

If we are ever to get to Paradise, Paradise must come to us. And in Jesus—precisely as he goes

to the cross—this is what is happening. On the cross, Paradise is coming to one sinner—and potentially to all sinners.

The believing criminal crucified with Jesus acknowledges that what's happening to him is justice. Yet he asks Jesus to remember him in his kingdom. That request is a plea for mercy, since the kingdom Jesus brings is sheer mercy. And the request is granted—now, *today,* even as justice is being carried out.

In our own daily crucifixions, we too hang helpless, like the criminal. Seldom are we perfectly innocent either. Precisely then—not when we're innocent, but when we're guilty—Christ's affirming word is also good for us. His kingdom runs on mercy. His open-handed angel is there for us too. Even when all we can blurt out is: "Jesus, remember me," his response is constant: "Yes. Today. With me." And that is Paradise.

Jesus, remember us, as we call to you from our crosses. Give us eyes to see your cross providing us access to Paradise, where mercy trumps everything—even the things that give us our just deserts. Then strengthen our faith, dear Lord, to trust you for it. Amen.

Tuesday, the First Week of Lent ..... Luke 12:4-5

Equal Sinners, Yet Different As Day And Night

One of the criminals ... kept deriding him ... but the other rebuked him, saying: "Do you not fear God?"
Luke 23:39-40

Two equally guilty criminals, yet different as day and night. What's the difference? The believing criminal says it's "fearing God." One does, one doesn't. But what does that mean?

The un-fearing thief thinks his big problem is with the authorities who caught him and the justice system now executing him. All he really needs is to get off that cross. Perhaps he doubts that there is a God at all, or that God knows he's innocent. Either way: with God there's nothing to fear.

"Not so," cries the believing thief. The "big" courtroom where nobody ever stands 100% innocent is God's courtroom. To "fear God" is to acknowledge the truth of our own lives. We do not fear, love and trust in God above all things. Yet fearing God is not the last word. The believing thief follows his fear word with a plea for mercy to the innocent one on the middle cross. To this guilty God-fearer, now a Christ-truster, Jesus offers acceptance. Remarkable!

When we are linked to Jesus, our case in God's court is already decided. Not that we're declared innocent. No, we're guilty as charged, and nevertheless forgiven. How so? Jesus enters our case, stands in for us before the Judge. He takes our sentence too, our place on the cross. In Christ our court date with God—that's judgment day—is already behind us. Call it Paradise. Today already! Incredible? No. It's worth believing. He said so.

Renew our hearts, God, to redeem our fears. Nothing in the world is worth fearing, you say, but you alone. Then in your Son you surprise us with his cheering words "Fear not." Let faith in this surprise replace our fear of anything—even you. Amen.

Wednesday, the First Week of Lent ..... Romans 6:20-23

The Thorn Of Justice

And we indeed have been condemned justly; for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds.
Luke 23:41

"The young demand justice. The old will settle for mercy." Someone coined that saying in the sixties. Of course, everyone wants justice, wants a fair shake. But there are premises in that demand—that the demanders are innocent, are being cheated out of their due reward, a reward that's good.

The old will settle for mercy. The more experience we have, the more we know how flimsy those premises are. No one of us is all that innocent. In Arthur Miller's play "After the Fall," we see a group of characters typical of our society. All are demanding justice in their own lives. Yet no one is innocent. They all live "after the fall," the fall into sin. In the difficulties they face they are getting what they deserve. And it is not very pleasant.

The believing criminal in Luke's Gospel does not demand justice. Instead he acknowledges that it is already happening to him. But then he has the chutzpah to ask for mercy from Jesus. Apparently he knows something, trusts something, that the other criminal doesn't. He clearly trusts that mercy is happening on the middle cross. So he goes for it. "Jesus, remember me—dirty hands and all." He'll settle for that. So can we.

Strengthen our hold on your mercy, O Lord. When justice awards us good things, inspire our thankful response. When its rewards bring pain, empower us to take them too in faith. Banish our pretended innocence. Keep us settling for mercy—with you and with each other. Amen

Thursday, the First Week of Lent ..... Luke 23:35-38

Saving Yourself

If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself! Luke 23:37

From the days of Israel's first great monarch, King David, the rule for the ruler—God's rule for the ruler—was *not* to save yourself. The assignment was just the opposite. Remember how David got into royalty? He was last in line in Jesse's big family. When none of his big brothers passed the test, the prophet asked if there were any more boys. "Oh, yes, there's the youngster out with the sheep. But he's not palace material." Well, it turned out he was. His fieldwork had prepared him to be King of the Jews.

Here's how. When the wolf, the lion, the rustler zero in on the flock, it's the shepherd's job to see to it that the sheep stay alive, even if it should mean that he does not. Jesus' own words in John's Gospel have always been the job description: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." David was never quite that good. But Jesus is.

Since he really is the last in David's line, the words "save yourself" are a temptation. He must say no. The truth is that because he is this King of the Jews, he cannot save himself. Saving us is his calling. He cannot save himself and still be King of the Jews. Pilate doubtless

wrote "King of the Jews" and put it over him for ridicule. But he wrote the truth. He saves others, that's why he cannot save himself.

Lord Jesus, thank you for saving us by sacrificing yourself. Put your shepherding spirit into us to be your sub-shepherds with those who surround us in daily life. Nourish us by your self-giving to lose ourselves for the welfare of others. Amen.

Friday, the First Week of Lent ..... Psalm 25: 1-7

Remembering How God Remembers Us

According to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord! Psalm 25:7

In the old church calendar the second Sunday in Lent had a Latin name, "Reminiscere." On that Sunday the liturgy called on God to reminisce, that is, to remember his people the way the psalmist prays. It's not that God might forget his mercy and loving-kindness toward us. Isn't the trouble rather our own amnesia, our forgetting how God remembers us?

We so easily get the wrong "mindset," as St. Paul likes to call it, not just when we think about others, but when we think about ourselves. It regularly slips our mind just how God keeps us in mind. For one thing, God remembers that we are marked with the cross of Holy Baptism—even when we forget. God is mindful that his own Son Jesus now calls us his own brothers and sisters—even when we forget. God remembers Jesus going around that full circle of suffering—for us.

It is not God's memory, but our own, that needs regular prompting. "Keep in mind," the canticle sings, "that Jesus Christ has died for us."

Remember us, O God, the way Jesus remembers us. When the hustle and bustle of daily life feed our amnesia, remember us as Jesus remembers us—together with him, in his kingdom. Amen.

Saturday, the First Week of Lent ..... Luke 23:39-43

Living Today In Paradise

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Matthew 18:20

"To be with me," Jesus says, "is to be in Paradise." That's the punch line of the second word from the cross. "Two or three gathered in his name," is the same thing. He's "among them." That's Paradise.

In his book-length parable, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis tells the story of people on a bus trip. They are travelling from a dull grey city where the sun never shines to a bright multi-colored land where the sun never sets. We soon learn that the bus route goes from hell to heaven, from a land of mere shadows to a land where everything is bright and solid. As they cross the border, each meets a former spouse, business partner, school chum, family member who was once cherished. Eavesdropping on their conversations, we hear the bright-spirit persons urging their shadow partners not to dwell on greyness, but to move toward the source

of light in this bright country. We soon catch on: the Light is Christ.

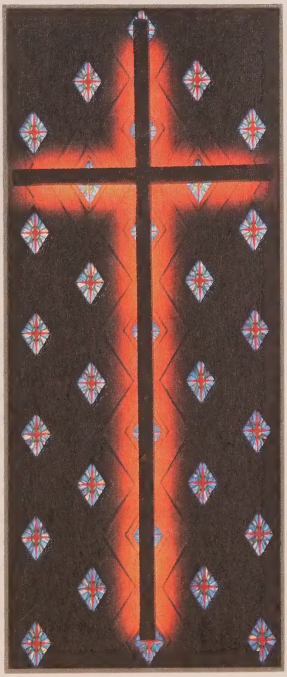
Before long another "aha" hits us: all this is really taking place before these folks ever died. On earth they were already in heaven or hell. Some had Jesus "among them" in their lives. Others had their own selves at the center. One equals heaven, one hell. The same is true for us. In whose name is our life "gathered"? Only one equals Paradise. We have Jesus' invitation: "Be with me today," and that makes today Paradise.

Gather us, Lord Christ, around your name. Unbend the direction of our daily lives from always curving back into ourselves. Help us live today as your bright spirits, moving out toward others still stuck, or stuck again, in the grey towns of our world. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent ..... Deuteronomy 8:1-3

Testing. Testing. One, Two, Three. Testing.

Remember [O, Israel,] the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart. Deuteronomy 8:2.



The "40 days" this Sunday involve God testing to find what's in his people's hearts, as Deuteronomy says. But God already knows that. God tests for the same reason that teachers test: so that students will know the truth about themselves. God tests Israel for forty years so that (finally!) God's people will know what's in their own hearts, and that it is at best a mixed bag. Human hearts are unknown territory, not to God, but to humans themselves. Another kind of testing God does in the scriptures is called "testing our faith," to see how strong or weak it is. Why? So *we* can see what faith can do when we trust God's promise. God's faith-tests increase *our* faith.

As Christ's disciples we benefit when we "take the tests" God gives us. That's true of both kinds: the ones that expose the defects in our own hearts and the ones that show God's power and call us to trust it. During Israel's forty years these two were most often one and the same exam. For Lenten disciples the same is true.

Lord, increase our faith. Encourage us to take the tests you place before us. Dislodge the prideful ego that occupies our hearts. Replace it with your words of forgiveness and mercy. Nudge us to shift our allegiances from our agendas to yours, from our self-made achievements to the good news you offer. Let Lent's forty days be "time enough" to get the job done in us—again. Amen.

Monday, the Second Week of Lent ..... John 19:25-27

Life In Relationships

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved ... John 19:26

Human life is life-in-relationship. That's a piece of the Creator's blueprint for people: "It is not good for the human being to be alone." Here in the third word from the cross two primary human relationships are before us: mother/son and master/disciple.

A 20th-century Spanish Christian writer, Ortega, put it this way: "I am me and my relationships." Our connection with particular people is the fabric of who we are, why our life story is different from anybody else's ever. For Jesus it was no different. For him too, mother and disciple are "significant others" who shaped his life. And here at the very end he continues to practice God's mandate for life-in-relationship: faithfulness. In this third word, Jesus is doing just that for one last time.

You and I know that faithfulness in relationships is hard work. We need all the help we can get. Christ is our source for keeping faith in our own relationships. Even as our own relationships bob and weave, he calls us "disciples whom he loves." We can trust him to keep faith with us. That empowers us to do the same in our relationships as well.

Faithfulness is not easy, Lord, given the people whom you've put around us, and given the persons we ourselves are. At best, all of us are sinners and saints at the same time. Increase our faith in you so that faithfulness may flourish in our life together with others. Amen.

Tuesday, the Second Week of Lent ..... Ephesians 6:1-4

The Thorn Of Childhood: The Child's Side

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Ephesians 6:1

The first people we all relate to are our parents. Even if we are orphaned at an early age, or, worse still, abandoned, parents (or their substitutes) shape us at the deepest level as we grow into becoming human. No wonder the Bible gives them near-divine status. Not because they're perfect, but because they do the work whereby God creates us to be who we finally are.

The biblical word for faithful response to parents is "Obey." That word is not fashionable nowadays. It signals the servile, the oppressive. Not so from the Bible's perspective. Obedience is "right," says Ephesians. The root meaning of obedience signals the rightness. It's "ob-audience," with the root word "audio," listening, in it. *Ob-audience* is "listening in the right direction." The "right" way to obey parents is to affirm their role as God's agents for creating and nurturing us. That's faithfulness in this primary relationship. But, of course, this relationship has its thorns. Ask any parent, ask any child. Not until parent-child connections are "in the Lord" are they finally really "right." For his own mother, here paradoxically "orphaned" by her son's death, Jesus cares. For us in our fractured parent-child roles with thorns that pierce and scratch, the same is true: he cares. Faith in him grounds faithfulness in all our relationships with significant others.

Lord, increase our faith that we may be "right" in what we hear and "right" in how we listen to the primary persons you've placed around us to carry out your work on us. Open our eyes to behold our parents as Jesus does his mother in his last words to her. Amen

Wednesday, the Second Week of Lent .....Colossians 3:20-21

The Thorn Of Parenthood: The Parent's Side

Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. Colossians 3:21

According to the New Testament, the commandment "Honor your father and your mother" is not a one-way street for children with no word for parents. No, parents get a mandate too—on how to use their authority. To be sure, parents are bigger than their kids—for a while, at least. But that's not what gives them their authority. Biblically viewed, all authority is an assignment from God for a specific purpose: to help some other specific person(s). God authorizes parents to be God's sort of father/mother to these specific children so that they do not "lose heart."

Authority is not tyranny. It's the requisite "clout" to carry out a task. Jesus even jolts his disciples with his words in Matthew 20. Authority, he says, does not put us over, but under others, to support, nurture, care for them. To do that you've got to be under those over whom you have authority!

Parental authority is God's authorization to shape the next generation to be God's kind of grown-ups. "Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" is how the Bible puts it. The fallen world equates authority with privilege. No wonder there's a crisis of authority. But authority as authorized service, as God's tender loving care, is God's calling for parents, and our calling as well in any authority role we have.

Your own exercise of authority, Jesus, brought you to the cross. And there you execute that authority in coming all the way down to suffer our death. Inform our authority roles with that same lordly lowliness to be unto others as you have been to us. Amen.

Thursday, the Second Week of Lent .....Psalm 23

Christ Amid Our Thorny Relationships

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me. Psalm 23:4

Humans are created to live in relationships. Relationship to other people is basic, but biblically it is third in a sequence. Our relational world is a threesome: outside, inside, God-side. We see it in Psalm 23.

The psalmist is in serious difficulty "on the outside." "The valley of the shadow of death" confronts him. Whatever all that might be, it includes the enemies mentioned next. Personal relations with these folks are not good. But of "the inside" what do we hear? "I fear no evil." His self-perception is OK. He copes with the bad news on the outside by means of a fearless

heart on the inside. And what's the source for that? His God-side relationship: "for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me."

None of us have permanent "green pastures." We have thorns on all three of these turfs snarling our lives like bramble. On the cross Christ addresses the deep one first, our root relationship with God. As those thorn-tangles break, he re-roots us in the living God. With that new root in place, new shoots grow, new perceptions of who we are and of our worth in the world. And from those shoots come new fruits, life-bestowing transactions with those on the outside. By the time Jesus breaks out full-blown at Easter, there is health and healing for all our relationships.

Heal us, Lord, in our relationships—root, shoots, and fruits. Break open the thorns that strangle our own growth—in trusting you, in being pleased with who we are, and in keeping faith with those you've given to surround our lives. Amen.

Friday, the Second Week of Lent ..... Luke 6:43-45

Christ Amid The Thorns Of Our Relationships With Ourselves

The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil. Luke 6:45

Our behaviors grow out of our attitudes. That's our contemporary way of saying what Jesus says here in Luke. So to change behaviors, we say, change your attitudes, the stuff on the "inside," what the Bible calls "the heart." True enough, but just saying it doesn't make it so.

When Luther explains the first commandment in his Small Catechism, he uses verbs of the heart: "fear, love, and trust in God above all things." What we fear, love and trust defines who we think (fear, love, and trust) we are. And from the treasure of this heart we live out our roles in daily life. Over and over again in his earthly ministry Jesus speaks to that agenda. "Do not let your hearts be troubled," he says (John 14:1). Does his saying it make it so? Jesus addresses these words to his anxious disciples. We too are not trouble-free in the heart. From our troubled hearts come our troubled behaviors. Like all troublesome people we need new hearts—healed hearts, untroubled ones.

Jesus follows up his word about heart-trouble with three little words: "Believe in me." You can indeed trust someone who'll go to the cross for you. Such trust does indeed produce a good heart on the inside with its "good treasure" for producing good in our relations on the outside.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take away your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Amen. (Psalm 51)

Saturday, the Second Week of Lent ..... Psalm 95:1-7

Christ Amid The Thorns Of Our Relationship With God

We are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand. Psalm 95:7

Pierced by grief, Mary can no longer watch. Behind closed eyes and tight lips she might even be praying the words we will soon hear from Jesus: "My God, my God, why?" Death always raises the God question, and not just for Jesus as he dies, but for Mary too. Is God for her or against her? Is the Lord's hand open or closing for her as Jesus dies? Answer: Yes. God's hand opens for her as it closes around Jesus in the marvelous exchange that makes Good Friday good.

Mary and John are linked at the cross of Jesus. John's own name in its Hebrew form, Johanan, means: "The Lord is showing favor." Indeed, the Lord is showing us favor. All of us who have been redeemed pass from the hand of Jesus to the hand of his heavenly Father. And what does that make us? "The sheep of his hand."

O Lord, we need your open hand. Your Son's passion puts us there. As the resurrected Christ he continues coming toward us to keep us there. Help us live today as the people of your pasture, the sheep of your hand. Amen

Third Sunday in Lent ..... 1 Kings 19:1-8

Strength Enough To Get To God's Hideout

And Elijah got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. 1 Kings 19:8

When Queen Jezebel swears to have Elijah's scalp, he flees for his life. He even tells God that he's quitting. Who needs this? Prophet, shmophet! And if God wants to zap him for giving up, so be it. Instead God nourishes him. Elijah's own name could have told us (and him too) that. The word "Eli-jah" is a full Hebrew sentence: "My God is Yahweh," the covenant God of Israel. This God champions the losers, restores the fallen, forgives sinners, refills those who are empty.

So Elijah gets food and drink to keep on going. With that nourishment he has strength (forty days' worth—just enough) to get to God's own hideout in the Sinai Desert. Here Jezebel can't get him . . . those forty days were just enough to provide the safe space

for Elijah's restoration to begin.

Lent's 40 days are safe space for us to get our second wind, to get relief from the Jezebels that are out to get us, to get the big picture. The Passiontide of Christ is just that: just enough space for us to see that Elijah's name is our name too. Our God is Yahweh, and Yahweh's beloved Son is our brother Jesus. So what does that make us? God's own beloved as well.

You brought Elijah through his wilderness, O God, and refilled him when his own emptiness brought him to despair. Do for us what you did for him. We have even better grounds to trust you for it. He too had your Word for it, but we also have your Word in the Flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. Refuel us from his fullness. Amen.

Monday, the Third Week of Lent ..... Mark 15:33-39

Why, God, Why?

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mark 15:34

Saint Mark records one and only one word from the cross: "My God, my God, why?" Mark seems to be in a hurry. He leaves only 15 verses for the entire crucifixion narrative and Jesus speaks only once, this cry of despair. Does that one cry make the whole story "good news"? Mark seems to say so.

Notice how he reports an answer to this cry. It does not come from the one Jesus calls "my God." It is instead the centurion carrying out the death sentence who tells us why. Why was Jesus God-forsaken? Why, because "truly this man was God's Son!" God's true Son joins sinners all the way down to God-forsakenness, down to cries of despair, even despair of God.

Earlier the bystanders had taunted Jesus: "If you are God's Son, come down from the cross." But since Jesus really *is* God's Son, he stays there. Phoney messiahs, pseudo-sons of God, don't do it this way. They avoid the cross at all costs. They leave their fans to do the crying, the despairing, the dying.

Not so this Son of God. He goes to the very pits, so that we will be rescued when we hit the pits. When we ourselves cry out: "My God, why?" the one who truly is God's Son speaks to us: "I've been there myself—in the Big Pit. And since I have been there, you will not stay there." We have his word for it and that gets us out. Truly!

In your suffering, Lord Jesus, you were wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon you was the punishment that makes us whole, and by your bruises we are healed. Truly you are your Father's Son, and we are truly grateful. Amen. [From Isaiah 53]

Tuesday, the Third Week of Lent ..... Matthew 27:45-54

Why Call God 'My' God?

About three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice ... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46

Even in the depths of being forsaken by God, Jesus addresses God as "my" God. Given the

circumstances, how can he do that? What's behind this pronoun "my"?

In the Christian story, my God is the one who possesses me, who claims me as his own. In Jesus' case it first happened at his baptism as the heavenly voice announced: "This is *my* beloved Son." Jesus has been living from that word ever since, and his "my" from the cross signals his continuing faith in it.

Our own baptism repeats that for us. But in our case, Jesus is also present as God says to us: "You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter." In his own Son at his moment of anguish, God was reclaiming, re-possessing lost sons and daughters. Since God claims me with a "my" of his own, I can claim God with the same little word—even when my God is forsaking me.

When we are sinking we need to hear our God inviting us: "Call on me in the day of trouble (even trouble that I bring to you); I will deliver you." Jesus banks on that promise, crying to "my" God as he hits bottom. Because he did, the same holds true for us.

When we hit bottom, God, remind us whose we are, that you are our God. Jesus was there and you remained his God. On his recommendation we call on you "out of the depths." Amen.

Wednesday, the Third Week of Lent ..... Psalm 22:1-5

The Thorn Of Our Own Forsakenness

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Psalm 22:2

The fourth word from the cross is the opening verse of Psalm 22. Jesus may have been praying the entire psalm aloud. Psalm 22 is a strange mixture of despair and trust all the way through.

Despite the odds against him, the psalmist nonetheless trusts that he'll survive. Why does he think so? Because of God's own track record with his ancestors, he says. They trusted and were delivered; cried to God and were saved. Doubtless Jesus too is building on God's track record as he prays this ancient prayer.

On our Lenten journey Jesus himself is now the center of God's track record. In raising him at Easter, God answers his Psalm 22 prayer on the cross. His Easter replaces our forsakenness with fullness in our relationship with God. With that emptiness healed, a new self comes to life on the inside. From such a new interior self, Easter-relationships with others do happen—even with others who once forsook us. Hard to believe? Check God's track record.

Do not be far from us, Lord, when trouble is near. When forsakenness withers us, focus our eye on that great cloud of witnesses—your own beloved Son included—who trusted you and were delivered. Amen. (From Psalm 22:11)

Thursday, the Third Week of Lent ..... Hebrews 11:32-40

The Thorn Of Meaningless Suffering

All these [who suffered], though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised. Hebrews 11:39

If there is some sense to our suffering, its thorns diminish. The pain of childbirth takes on

meaning in the new life that is born. The agony of chemotherapy makes sense as the tumor shrivels. But we also know the sort of suffering that the 11th chapter of Hebrews describes—senseless suffering, mad, insane pain and cruelty.

The Word from God for such suffering is no slick answer. It is rather a person, God's Son, and his promise. Jesus participated so totally in our thorn brambles that he too cried for some sense to it all. For him the sense came not by looking back to figure out how it all happened, but rather looking forward to God's untangling it all. (His last word from the cross says just that: "Father, into your hands....")

For us, also, it is the future God holds for us, not our past (however it unfolded), that makes sense of our entire life, suffering included. Examining our life from its end in Easter, we can see the meaning of all the rest of it. That's what put sense into Jesus' senseless suffering. He puts the same sense into ours. Thus even now we can start viewing our own suffering in the light of Easter.

Lord, suffering confuses us we review the story of our own lives. Flash before our eyes our story's Easter-ending, that last chapter already written in our book by your beloved Son. So often we forget how our story really ends. Keep us reading from the end. Amen.

Friday, the Third Week of Lent ..... John 3:14-18

The Thorn Of God's Own Suffering

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him ... may have eternal life. John 3:16

You and I would be arrested if we gave away our children. Worse yet, if we sacrificed their lives for the sake of someone else. How can God get away with that? It's all wrapped up in the word "so" used twice in this famous Bible passage.

The first "so" is often misunderstood to mean "so much." God loved the world so much that he would go to such desperate lengths to get us back. St. John's own Greek word is not this kind of "so." It's a "how so?" word. How so did God love the world? "Just so, in just this way" by carrying out a radical exchange program. He traded the dearest Son, so that the renegade children, dear to God, but not very endearing on their own, might get God's own life back into them.

The second "so" is "so that." So that by trusting this give-away Son the worldlings might

have God's own life again. This second "so" is as marvelous as the first. The father-son project is a give-away action to get back all the lost kids. God took the risk of losing the Last One in the family to get all of us kids back home. And we are home when we trust the give-away Son. Now isn't that something! Yes, indeed. On the cross it happened just so.

Thank you, God, for sending your give-away Son to bring us home from our wanderings. Things that perish still tug at us to find our life in what they offer. Bend us back to hang our hearts on Christ for the life that lasts. Amen.

Saturday, the Third Week of Lent ..... Acts 13:13-16, 36-39

Why Jesus At All?

By this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Acts 13:39

Our western world is hardly "Christian" any longer—if it ever really was. People from other religions, or no religion at all, interact with us daily. They seem just as nice or un-nice as Christians are. So why Jesus? What's unique about him?

When Paul spoke at the synagogue in Pisidia, someone must have raised the same question. Note that Paul does not claim superior morals for the Jesus-believers. Instead he says that their God-relationship is better, better even than what Moses provided, which was the very best that had ever been. Jesus offers a freedom that you can't get elsewhere, Paul says. It's freedom in our relationship with God. Alternative religions, especially today's secular ones, don't think our God-relationship needs fixing at all. Bad behavior, bad attitudes, are seen as the problem. Fix them, and everything's fixed.

Paul diagnoses differently. The root malady is unfaith, our chronic distrust of God. That's what sin, capital S, is. On the cross Jesus "fixes" that—in two ways. He trades places with sinners for the payoff of their unfaith, and thereby shows us a really different kind of God, one whom sinners can trust. How bad is your unfaith, your pit with God? Christ's agonized cry: "My God, my God, why?" is simultaneously his pledge to us: "I've been there. I'll trade you. Trust me."

My God, my God, why did you send Jesus? We know why. It was your love for sinners—and we are elated. By this Jesus we live in freedom in our ongoing life with you, and that sets us free for everything in the world. Thanks for this incredible freedom. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent ..... Genesis 7:1-16

The Mystery Of Rain—And The Rainbow

I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground. Genesis 7:4

Rain, which can be both a wonder and a terror, is God's agent, does God's work both as blessing and as judgment. Rain for forty days and forty nights is judgment, no question.

However, it lasts "only" forty days and forty nights. Here too the biblical forty signals time needed to get a task done, and then it's over. God's judgment is not everlasting even though human wickedness seems to be. God's judgment has a time limit.

But God has something else going in our wicked world that has no time limit. It came after the flood was over. The rainbow after the rain, such a marvel in its own right, signals "the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Genesis 9). That is as marvelous in human history as the rainbow is in natural history. That's where Lent fits in.

Lent calls us to join God in his analysis and judgment of our own lives with no holds barred—and forty days yet! But then to look up after the rain to God's rainbow, the everlasting covenant that God has signed with us. Jesus the Christ is that signature. Noah's ark was good enough for the forty-day flood. God's rainbow arc (Christ) is even better. It lasts forever.

When the rain of pain and floods of all sorts break into our lives, O God, remind us of your servant Noah. For the repentance that such waters urge upon us, move us to do just that. And as we do repent, set before our eyes your Rainbow, your promise of faithfulness to us and your whole creation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday, the Fourth Week of Lent ..... John 19:28-42

He's Thirsty Just Like Us

He said, "I am thirsty." John 19:28

He's thirsty. Just like us. But thirsts are dangerous. Thirsts are always danger points. If you are human, you have them. Not just for water, but for affection, for security, for self-respect, for rest, and more. Medieval Christians counted seven such human thirsts, seven drives. They also saw the seven deadly sins associated with each thirst.

Our thirsts demand our attention. Not to do so hurts, really hurts. But that is not the crucial factor. Something else makes them lethal. When a thirst takes over, becomes all-consuming, our trust in God gets consumed too. Satisfy it at any cost, and it will indeed destroy us—and often others as well.

What all do we thirst for—especially when we're on our own crosses! How readily do we tend to *them* and evict God from our center! Jesus thirsts, yet keeps the faith. He copes with it. Finally even his thirst just to live goes unquenched. He does it all in our place in his body on the tree. Jesus, the thirsty one, joins us on our Lenten journey, in the midst of the thorns of our own thirsts to bring us finally to the open tomb.

At root it is life, Lord, that we are thirsting for. Thirst-quenchers offered by our world all leave wounds when we sip. Bring Christ to us again for the life we long for and open our eyes to parched people all around us. Amen

Tuesday, the Fourth Week of Lent ..... John 4:7-15

'Water, Water, Everywhere Nor Any Drop To Drink'

Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. John 4:14

The woman at the well conversing with Jesus in the fourth chapter of John is a biblical version of the Ancient Mariner's lament in Colerdge's poem: "Water, water, everywhere/Nor any drop to drink." Readers of the poem recall that it was not potable water, but forgiveness, that the mariner thirsted for and could not find.

The conversation at Jacob's well unfolds in the same metaphor. The woman's many husbands parallel her coming again and again to the famous well, patriarch Jacob's gift for slaking thirst. But it takes more than Jacob's bequest to do that job. Here, finally, is someone greater than Jacob. On the cross Jesus fulfills his promise to the woman. He takes into himself the death-point in all her thirsts (ours too) and offers instead God's kind of life where thirsts no longer tyrannize. Thus death threats too are gone. With mouth and lips thus moistened, we become gushers, he says, for others. "The water that I will give will become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life [for others]." "Gusher" is not a word Christians normally use for themselves. But if our Lord says it, then it must be so. For us today that says: Go, gush. Not that we've got to, but that we get to, gush living water to a thirsty world.

Thank you, Lord, for taking the cup of death from our lips and giving us your cup of living water in its place. Let the life that we draw from this drink flow from us into the life streams of those we meet this day. Amen

Wednesday, the Fourth Week of Lent ..... Matthew 4:1-11

And God Sent Dryness

He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." Matthew 4:2-3

Jesus is led, St. Matthew tells us, by God's own Spirit into the wilderness, the dry God-empty desert. Why does God send dryness to his beloved Son? Why does God send us, his daughters and sons, into deserts? If we are God's children, why those wildernesses, those parched deserts? It doesn't compute.

The tempter makes a very plausible proposal: If you are God's Son—better still, since you are God's Son—why should there be any dry periods in your life at all? And if they do arise, then shouldn't your status give you privilege for getting rid of them? It all seems so sensible. But the One whose Son he is is not a God who flees the wilderness. Instead he enters our wilderness-world. And once there he empties himself of all divine privilege, the divine perks. Why? So that he may pour them into us, the real empties. His words: "I thirst" signal the last

chapter of his total emptying—for us, into us. Finally on the cross he is the fullness of God filling us empties.

Not surprisingly, this Son of God does not exempt his disciples either from going back into the world's wildernesses. Nourished by him, we get wilderness assignments, for and with others who know only dryness and are dying in their deserts. He is the Word that comes from the mouth of God, a promise to live on, no matter how deadly, how demonic, our desert.

Nourish us, God, in our deserts today. Open our eyes to see your Son joining us in our dry places. Feed us with his Word so that as we flourish, the desert, too, blossoms where you have sent us to serve. Amen.

Thursday, the Fourth Week of Lent ..... 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Thirst—Thorns That Never Go Away

A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to ... keep me from being too elated.
2 Corinthians 12:7

Saint Paul had a thorn that he could never get rid of. Since he links it with "flesh," his favorite word for sinners walking away from God, it must have been something more than a physical disability. His own Greek term for it portrays not a thorn sticking into him, but a thorn sticking out from him. It was some place in his life where his own sinner-self was all too visible. What was it really? He never says. So let's imagine. Let's imagine that it was one of the seven thirsts, the primal drives that characterize us all. One of Paul's thirsts he could never quench. It always managed to take control of him instead of vice versa. When he begged God for its removal, God always said: "You are going to be stuck with it. But don't worry. My grace will cover you. My power will fill the bill as I continue to cover your weakness." Upon hearing this, he then pivots and starts boasting of his weakness. If it's Christ-covered, it's a plus.

The thorns of our poorly-managed thirsts need not terrorize us either. We too cannot keep our sinner-selves from showing. How drastic is that? Depends on what we do when it happens. Cope with it on our own and we're guaranteed losers. Link it to the power of the Crucified and it's taken care of. A done deal. Like Paul, we too are authorized to link our weaknesses to Christ and join in Paul's feisty boast: "When I am weak, then I am strong!"

Thorns not only hurt, dear God, they paralyze us. Enliven us with your grace to counteract the thorns that never seem to go away. Your grace is sufficient, and covered with it, we are sufficient too for whatever is at hand. Amen.

Friday, the Fourth Week of Lent ..... John 19:28-29

The Vinegar Of Daily Life

When Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said [in order to fulfill the scripture], "I am thirsty."
John 19:28

This passage from John includes two qualifiers as Jesus asks for a drink: knowing that all was finished and to fulfill the scriptures. We meditate on that second qualifier today. With the

words "I am thirsty," Jesus is *fulfilling the scriptures.* Which ones? In Psalm 69:21, King David bemoans to God that his adversaries "gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." As Jesus walks the circle of thorns, he replicates David's life, and ours as well, taking into himself all the vinegar that adversaries pour into our lives.

Yet the greater adversary that sinners confront is not just mean people, as bitter as that cup indeed can be. There is, as the Old Testament prophets say, a more deadly cup confronting all the children of Adam and Eve. It is the "cup" of God's own rebuke. Divine vinegar, you might say.

Before we can ever drink the "cup of salvation," someone has to take that other cup. On the cross, Jesus is taking it, taking it willingly. He drinks our vinegar, and in its place puts into our hand the cup of salvation. That cup, by contrast, is sweet—like fresh water after vinegar, or like honey, the Bible's sweetest metaphor. He invites us to "taste and see how gracious the Lord is."

Lord, the vinegars of daily experience have not left our lives. Pour into our cup the sweetness of your salvation, that cup of gladness, the cup of Christ's new covenant with us. Amen.

Saturday, the Fourth Week of Lent ..... Psalm 42:1-11

Christ The Thirst-Quencher

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said [in order to fulfill the scripture], "I am thirsty." John 19:28

St. John's second qualifier to "I am thirsty" is that Jesus *knew that all was now finished.* Jesus' request for drink, as the crucifixion draws to a close, carries the overtones of yet another prayer from the Psalms, a homecoming prayer: "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1).

The psalmist offers God's own self as drink to quench what we thirst for—recognition, love, approval, a thousand things. But a better answer, says our culture, is to "get what you're thirsty for and drink it." Yet just to satiate ourselves with whatever "works," does not really work.

Recall Jesus' own words at Jacob's well (John 4). To quench life's thirsts in that way is always to be thirsty. For our daily thirsts are symptoms of a primal thirst, our "thirst for the living God." Not until that thirst is quenched can the other ones be satisfied.

As he thirsts and drinks at the cross, Jesus opens God's thirst-quencher for us. The thirst-quencher that suffices for him on the cross now works for us as well. What we need he supplies—nothing less than the living God. Once more: "Oh, taste and see..."

Lord, we too, it seems, are always thirsty. Your Son's cross uncapped the fountain of life for parched people. Inundate us in that liquid refreshment of the living God. Liquify us to be your bubbling brook for others, all others. Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Lent ..... Jonah 3:1-10

Forty Days For Nineveh

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Jonah 3:4

When the pouting, reluctant prophet Jonah at long last arrives in Nineveh, he proclaims its doom. But not right away. There is a forty-day grace period. Forty days to get a particular job done. That is, "to turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands." And much to Jonah's own surprise, and later dismay, they actually do it and "God relent[s] and change[s] his mind." Jonah wanted them wiped from the face of the earth. So did every Israelite of his day, given what Nineveh had done to them.

After a few more episodes between the pouting prophet and his gracious God, Jonah finally catches on. If God can be merciful to one rebellious prophet, why not to Nineveh with its mega-populace of equally "dumb" citizens. In our fits of (pseudo-)righteousness, we wish all real sinners would get the ax right now without any forty-day waiting period. Not so with God. He offers us "time enough."

St. Paul picks up this Jonah accent in Romans 2: "Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" When such repentance happens, we are told, there is joy in heaven. For that too, Jesus says, we are to pray that God's will be done on earth as it [already] is in heaven. Christ's way of the cross is about that too. Joy about repentance? Why not? For Jonah, for Nineveh, for us, it is a turn from death to life. If that's not grounds for joy, what is?

Restore unto us the joy of our salvation, dear God, beginning with our joy in repentance. First of all, our own repentance, then also that of others. You have joy in heaven about our turnaround and return to you. Overjoy us in the same way in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday, the Fifth Week of Lent ..... Isaiah 53:3-9

Is He finished?

Jesus said, "It is finished." John 19:30

We can imagine Jesus' head sunk between his shoulders, his eyes closed, his lips blackened, his muscles stretched. He seems just moments away from death. He is completing, he is finishing the work of dying. But is he thereby "finished," ruined, relegated to the scrap heap? Not really.

He is on assignment. A tough one. In Isaiah's words, it was to be crushed for our iniquities, to take the part of straying sheep, not in spite of being the divine Shepherd, but exactly because he is that Good Shepherd. It's his job. When danger threatens, good shepherds don't run, hoping that the sheep will somehow make it. Instead, knowing that all we like sheep are sure losers if we have to cope with death on our own, he steps into our spot. And by his bruises we get healed. By going the entire route of death, he completes our chance for life that lasts. "It is finished" is not

necessarily a cry of exhaustion. It also announces a job is done. Straying sheep are home free.

You carry through, Good Shepherd, on your promises—all the way to the end. We ground our lives on that goodness, are given courage by its never-flagging power, and look toward the day when you bring us finally across the finish line. Amen.

Tuesday, the Fifth Week of Lent ..... John 19:8-12

'Case Closed' Against Jesus

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30

What did Jesus mean with the words: "It is finished"? The Greek word St. John uses is a courtroom term. It means "case closed." Whose case? The case against Jesus? Yes, but there's more. Take another look at the dialogue between Jesus and Pontius Pilate.

As John reports it, we soon see that Pilate himself is on trial. When Pilate tries to enmesh Jesus in his own power game, Jesus reminds Pilate of the "game" being played on him (John 19:11). He's accountable to God for his political office. What he does with Jesus will bounce back in God's verdict on him. Pilate thinks he's in charge, and only Jesus is on trial. From one angle that's true, but the roles are also reversed: Pilate on trial, Jesus the judge. So it should not really surprise us that it is Jesus, not Pilate, who pronounces the "case closed." Only the one on the bench, the judge, can close cases. Well then, is Jesus the one in charge or the one being charged—and executed? Answer: Yes. Both are true.

The charge against Jesus was: He says he's King of the Jews. How do you test that? Jewish kings are shepherd-kings. Not until such a king dies so that the sheep may live, do we have the evidence to close the case. Jesus dies so that others may live. He truly is the King as charged. Case closed. Pilate, and all of us, need just such a King—for dear life. Thereby our case is closed.

You are guilty as charged, Lord Jesus, guilty of being our king. Anyone associating with sorry-looking sheep like us has to reckon with the consequences, and you did. Not just once on Good Friday as our Good Shepherd, but today and tomorrow as well. Our life depends on that. Amen.

Wednesday, the Fifth Week of Lent ..... Romans 8:1-4

'Case Closed' Against Us

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1

With no condemnation against those who are "in" Christ Jesus, the case against Christians is closed too. One axiom of the Christian gospel is that what is now true of Jesus the Christ is also true of his believers. Paul's little word "in" is the key. When you are "in" him, it's "case closed."

How do people get in on what happens to Jesus? Paul has only one word for that: faith. And faith means trust. Trust Christ when his "case-closed" happens, and it's true for you. It's yours.

Trust him not, and it's not yours. In today's reading Paul describes how it all came about. God sent his Son into our sinners' network. Once there, and willingly there, he also became enmeshed in the lock-step sequence of "the law of sin and death." If sin, then death. And thus he died. But once the law carries out its sentence on an offender, it can no longer touch him. Jesus is the one flash point in our world where the "law of sin and death" is past history. To be in on that is heaven on earth. It's ours for the trusting. Trust him, and it's yours.

Not only does such trusting get us "out" of the law's jaws, but we get "in" on the Spirit of life, the death-proof life, in Christ Jesus. "Case closed" on the law of sin and death is freedom. And freedom is an entirely different case. By faith it's ours.

We still argue our righteousness, Lord, falling away from the "in" that erases all condemnation. Bring us back "in" to faith in Christ, trusting that our case is closed, so we can tend to the other business that you put before us. Amen.

Thursday, the Fifth Week of Lent ..... 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Are You Running With Me, Jesus?

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

To finish his life in faith—that's Paul's own personal goal about the finish line ahead of him. He uses two conflict words—a fight and a race—to reflect on it. His grounds for confidence that it was a good fight and a finished race are his faith.

Some years ago a popular book carried the title *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?* That title is Paul's perspective. To finish or to fail our life's calling is based not on our list of achievements, but on whoever accompanied us on the racetrack and in the ring. Who are you running with? That is what makes for a good or bad race. Run with Jesus, the "Author and Finisher" of the Christian gospel, and we're running a good race. No matter if everybody else gets to the finish line before us. And the same is true of life as a fight. Hooked to Christ, Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 6, he was most often on the losing end of conflicts and still a winner; "dying and yet alive; punished, but not yet killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." In our own our callings, we finish well when we are partnered with the Christ who did finish first. He promises never to break the partnership. Trusting his promise, we finish right alongside the winner.

We too, dear Jesus, want to finish our race and keep the faith. When our track record looks bad—and also when it looks good—keep us running with you. Give us your Second Wind, your Spirit, to finish our race. Amen.

Friday, the Fifth Week of Lent ..... Revelation 12:7-12

Reopening Closed Cases

The accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.
Revelation 12:10

Jesus announces his own "case closed" with his next-to-last breath. If the case against him is

closed, then the same is true for all who trust him. Still, it seems our cases get reopened daily here on earth. Some charge, challenge, accusation, some reindictment coming from other people calls us to respond.

In today's reading St. John traces this fact of life to the work of Christ's arch-enemy, Satan. The job of accuser is his standard role. When he brings charges against Christians (whose cases Christ has closed), he becomes a new nemesis. He's the Grand Deceiver, out to con us into defending ourselves. You know how it happens. When accused, we respond with a knee-jerk self-defense or counter-accuse or pass the buck or deny—or just run. But in all of these "normal" human responses we are deserting Christ our Public Defender. Abandoning his defense, we reopen our case to sure defeat.

Today's reading gives heaven's counsel for such situations: "Conquer the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, by making the Lamb's Word your own testimony." Christ authorizes us to use his verdict on us for our own testimony when accused in daily life. Doing so we conquer. Reindictment fails. It's "case closed" again. What a Public Defender to have on your side!

We make so little use of your defense in our daily lives, Lord. We often work for the accuser. Unbind us from being his "angels." Open our ears to your word about us to use in the courtrooms of our daily life. Put us to work closing, not reopening the cases of our fellow sinners. Amen.

Saturday, the Fifth Week of Lent ..... Psalm 107:4-9

Some Stories Seem Never To Finish

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town. Psalm 107:4

Garrison Keillor, America's master radio storyteller, once ended a story before it came to any conclusion. His fans complained. So the next week he asked his audience whether that wasn't really true because so many lives never get anywhere, just run on and on and finally run out.

The psalm reading today takes note of the same thing. People wander all their lives, and never find their way to the town, to any goal or conclusion. T. S. Eliot said something similar about modern western culture in his famous line: This is the way the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper. The psalmist knows the secret about finishing our life. It is not an achievement, but a gift. The gift-giver is God. Unless the Lord takes us in hand, we wander, never getting to the town. Finishing a life is never a chance accident. Only someone who got there before can show us the way.

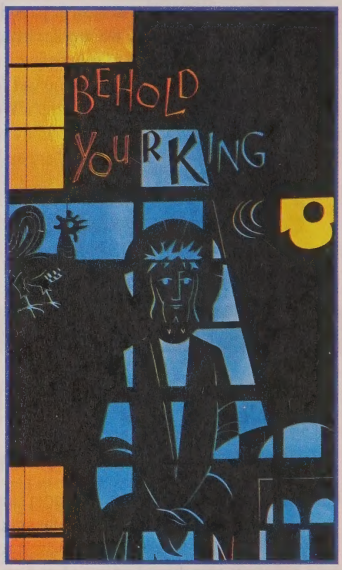
When Jesus finished his course, he put his life back in the hands of his Father. His life came to closure, not with a whimper, but with the bang of Easter. For us whimperers who never get anywhere, he offers to take us along to his own Big Bang. Not only will he show us the way, he is the Way. Lives linked to him attain closure, the same resurrection high that overjoys every whimper.

Bring our lives to Christ's Easter closure, dear God, so that our wanderings may cease. Today's world offers us a myriad of places to go, but they all end with a whimper. Bring us to your town by the Way that works for everyone, your beloved Son, our brother Jesus. Amen.

Palm [Passion] Sunday ..... 2 Samuel 5:1-5

Jewish Kings And Jewish Royal Authority

David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 2 Samuel 5:4



David had forty years on the throne to get God's job done. And what was that? According to the divine job description, "you shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you shall be ruler over Israel" (v.2). Jewish kings are called to be "rulers over" by being "shepherds under." How so "under?" It's all in the word shepherd, and whose shepherd David is. The sheep are not David's; they belong to God. What then is his link with the sheep? Simple, to keep them alive and well for the One they belong to. When danger threatens, the shepherd dies (if necessary) so that the sheep survive. He is there to preserve them.

Good as David was on the whole, God needed a better shepherd for God's people. On this Sunday before Easter we celebrate just such a genuine descendent of David, an authentic Jewish king, the final Good Shepherd. We follow him this week on the last mile of the way to the cross. Here he gives his life for the sheep, and in that very act gives his life to the sheep. When later this week he's called "King of the Jews," that's what it's all about. Keep this concept of "Jewishness" in mind as Holy Week unfolds.

Dear God, you sent us Jesus by the way of the cross. That marks him indelibly as your final Good Shepherd for us. In his Easter victory you called him from death to extend his commission to us as sub-shepherds, his and yours, to rescue the lost, to heal the injured, to lay down our own lives for one another. Empower us to do what you've commissioned us to be. Amen.

Monday of Holy Week ..... Luke 23:44-49

Handing Over Our Lives

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:46

On the one hand, death seems to be God's abandonment of human beings. Grim as that may sound, we have Jesus' word for it: in human death God is forsaking sinners. The wages of sin

is death. That is not good news.

That word, though true, is not God's last word. What is the full truth about death? The full truth is God's own offer for sinners to live. But that means God, not the sinner, has to cope with sin's "wages." Hence Good Friday. Here God's Son positions himself to reposition sinners so that they may hear God's own last word about death: "Call me Father, and hand your death over to me."

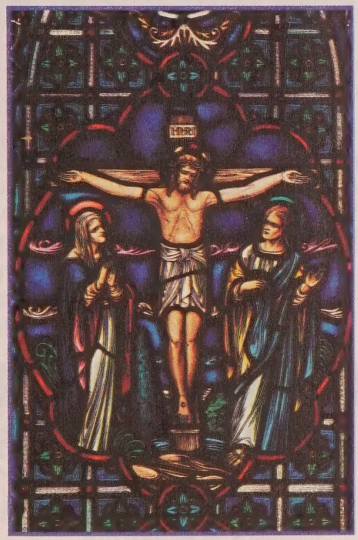
When they die, God's children do indeed lose their lives. But because of Jesus, God's second word, it's death with a difference. His Father is now "Our Father" too. Things commended to him are finally never lost. The hand into which we commend our death is a hand that hangs on to us—for dear life.

Almighty God, you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take our flesh upon him and to suffer death on the cross. Grant that we may share in his obedience, trusting you as he did, and thereby share the glorious victory of his resurrection. Amen. [From the Collect for Passion Sunday]

Tuesday of Holy Week ..... Psalm 31:14-16

Dying As Stewardship

My times are in your hand. Psalm 31:15



In handing over his life to his Father, Jesus shows that human life is stewardship. Life is not something we own, but a gift entrusted to us. And when the life is lived in stewardship (as caretaker of someone else's property), then death is but the last event in this lifelong transaction.

Even our secular world can say life is a gift. But if that is true, then there is a Giver, some "big" hand from whom we received our lives. Our chronic sin is to deny our life as gift, to declare ourselves the owner, and then to "do what I want" with my own life. But we are not our own. No one is. Christians are not their own twice over. As creature, our life itself is a gift of the creator. There is a second sense in which we are not our own. We "were bought with a price," Jesus' life and death, which is indeed "costly grace." That makes us Christ's own. Owning up to whose we are is the deep secret of who we are.

Jesus lived his life as his Father's Son. That is who he was because that is whose he was. In dying he handed it all back to the original owner. That's dying in faith. That makes his a "blessed" death. So is ours when we do our dying just like that. And by virtue of our second owner, we can.

I believe that Jesus Christ—true God and true man—is the one to whom I belong. That he has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood, and his innocent suffering and death, that I may be his own and live under him and his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. This is most certainly true. Amen. [from Luther's Small Catechism]

Wednesday of Holy Week ..... Psalm 90

There Are Other Ways To Die

So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart. Psalm 90:12

The Hebrew metaphor "counting our days" means there is a guaranteed end to our days. It is a must, not a maybe. And the pathos in the "must" of death is God's voice saying: "Back to dust, sinner."

Two other death views dominate today, both of which are wrong. One goes all the way back to Socrates. For Socrates death was no big deal. Unjustly accused and sentenced, he still drank his poison with ease. Death was OK, even natural. Sharply opposite is the second view expressed in Dylan Thomas' famous line: "Do not go gentle into that dark night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light." This sounds closer to Psalm 90, but is finally just as wrong as Socrates was. Socrates didn't see God at all in his dying. He died with both eyes shut. Dylan Thomas has at least half an eye open, but that's still poor vision. "Gentle" may not be the way to cope, but "rage" is blind too. Thomas' half-open eye doesn't see God in the dark night. In death it is God we must confront.

His other eye is fully closed to God's second word about death. That second word is celebrated in the last five verses (13-17) of Psalm 90: God's favor, compassion, and steadfast love—even for those whom he visits in death. Repentance, not rage, is how to cope with God's first word in death. The eye of faith then trusts God's second word about death, Jesus, the Word made flesh. His cross and resurrection make it work for us.

Almighty God, your Son our Savior suffered at the hands of men and endured the shame of the cross. Grant that we may walk in the way of his cross and find it the way of life and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. [From the Collect for Wednesday of Holy Week]

Maundy Thursday ..... Jeremiah 31:31-34

Handouts In The Lord's Supper

Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:27-28

On Thursday evening of Holy Week Jesus eats his last meal with the disciples. In the middle of the traditional Passover meal Jesus institutes his own meal, the Lord's Supper. The words he

speaks are a flashback to our reading from Jeremiah. What the old covenant, good and God-given as it was, could not do for God's people, this one can and does. The old one couldn't guarantee that it got to people's hearts. By virtue of its focus on performance, God kept track of commandment-breakers. Sin got remembered. Sin ruined the whole thing.

Via Jeremiah God proposes a new covenant not like the old one. It will get to people's hearts. It's for everyone, no matter who they are. It centers in God "forgiving iniquity, remembering sin no more." In his last meal before death Jesus announces: "The new covenant. It's me." He makes that covenant with sinners in the bread, wine and words he offers his disciples.

At this meal Jesus is handing out—in advance—the results of what will happen on the next day. It's actually a preview encounter with the Easter Lord. In this Supper Jesus already distributes the benefits of his cross. So also for us. Christ hands us those Easter benefits. He designates it the forgiveness of sins. No more fracture exists between God and us. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life, new meaning, new healing. Jesus is our new covenant with God. In his Supper he hands it to us—again and again.

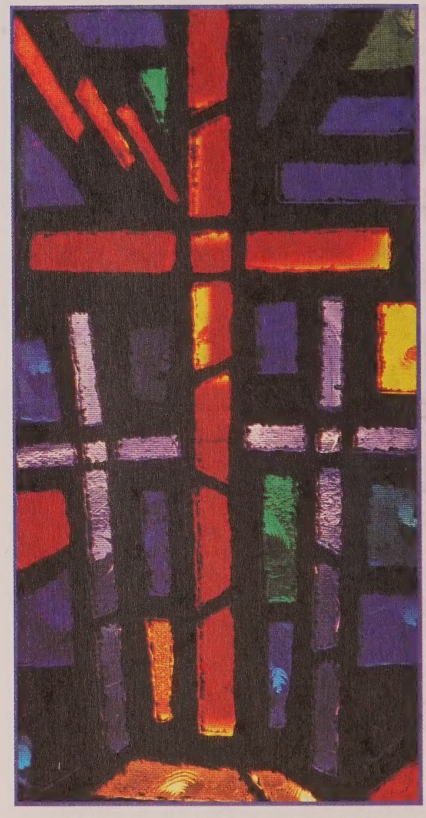
We remember you, Lord Jesus, when we join in your Holy Supper. Not just recalling the events of your dying, we remember how you remember us in your self-offering for our forgiveness, in your Eastering us back to our own new covenant with God, your Father and now also ours. Amen.

Good Friday ..... Luke 23:44-49

Our Lifelines Written In Our Hands

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. Luke 23:46

Though death is clearly behind the risen Christ, the scars on his hands (and the other scars too)



remain. They do not disappear at Easter. Why not? Because they now are the marks of victory, not defeat. Though once dead (the scars verify that), he now lives. That high point of his life and work is forever imprinted in his hands.

Pause now for a moment on this Good Friday to look at your own hands. How much of your own life's history can you read there? What stories are written on your hands—the scars, the callouses (or their absence), the bent fingers, the fingernails (chewed or blackened), the hangnails, the rings on the fingers (or their absence), the finger-joints, the wrinkles, the moles, the visible veins.

When Jesus puts his life into his Father's hand, it is a prelude to his offering that life to us, handing it over to us. When he offers us his hand, encouraging us to clasp his in ours, the two whole lives written in those two hands are joined, and even better, exchanged. His scars for ours—but with one significant difference. Our scars signal the mortality still ahead of us. His scars have death already behind them. Can that really be swapped when he offers his scarred hand to us? He says so. What a marvelous swap!

Lord Jesus, you carried our sins in your own body on the tree so that we might have life. May we and all whom we remember this day find new life in you now and in the world to come, where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. (From the Collect for Good Friday)

Holy Saturday ..... Hebrews 4:8-11, 14-16

Sabbath Rest

A Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. Hebrews 4:9

On this Saturday-in-between, Jesus lies entombed. For him too it's Sabbath. In today's reading from Hebrews the apostle notes that even in the Old Testament the really big Sabbath rest that

God intended for the chosen people never happened.

The commandment for full rest on the seventh day of every week was their routine reminder of God's long-range blueprint, namely, rest from the hard work of being right with God. Yet they never got there because of their "hardness of heart," says the writer. They never came to the place where they could relax, trusting that their transactions with God were also at rest. Good Friday brings the big Sabbath rest for folks harried by hustling their own righteousness. Jesus dies as the high priest who puts himself on the altar of atonement. Such never-before temple action breaks open the barricades to the temple's inner sanctum, the mercy-seat of God. The hard work to get sinners righteous is done. It's time to rest. If there is any action at all, it is to enter God's inner sanctum "with boldness" (as the writer of Hebrews says) and enjoy it.

So on this Saturday-in-between God counsels us to take a deep breath, to sit down, and not do anything. We too can "cease from our labors as God did from his." So did Jesus. That's what makes this day Holy Saturday.

You invite us, Lord Jesus, to come to you when we labor and are heavy laden and you will give us rest. As we take your yoke upon us, we learn from you; for you are gentle and humble in heart, and we do find rest for our souls. Amen. [From Matthew 11:28-29]

Out By Easter, Out For Easter— Encountering Our Last Enemy

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. I Corinthians 15:26

"He is risen. He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!" That early morning shout from antiquity is our doxology today. But then . . . why is death still around, still our enemy, still spooking us?

Exiting the tomb, Jesus breaks open the ring of death's encircling thorns. Though still present in our lives, their stranglehold is shattered. Paul uses the Old Testament image of "first fruits" in Corinthians to convey what's going on at Easter. God's project is to create out of death-infected people a new human race in Christ. The first produce of that new crop is already ripe as Jesus exits the tomb. But "first fruits" carry the notice that more is coming, namely, all "those who belong to Christ."

Another Easter image is the new *body* of humanity. At Easter the head has destroyed the last enemy and is alive out of the tomb. It is now just a matter of time till that head pulls us body members out of our tombs. Christ zooms toward us to busy himself with our Easter. It is already underway. Our own dying cannot undo it. His scarred hands are the ones to trust.

Almighty God, your only Son overcame death and opened for us the gate to life that lasts. Hold before us his scarred hands when we meet the last enemy—both in life's little deaths and in the final one at the end—so that we may indeed follow him to our own Easter. Amen.

WORDS FROM THE CROSS, © 1996 Creative Communications for the Parish, was written by the Rev. Dr. Edward H. Schroeder and published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. Phone: 800-325-9414. All photos by Gene Plaisted. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

LENT AT HOME

FAMILY ACTIVITIES FOR LENT

By Kathy and Mitch Finley

LENT AT HOME

KATHY AND MITCH FINLEY

Lent is a time for reflection and renewal, for reflecting again on the tremendous Christian promise of a life that even conquers death. Although our first connections with Lent may be through church-based activities, there are many ways to observe Lent at home where children can be involved and feel free to ask questions.

The word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for the lengthening of the days as spring approaches and death-like winter recedes. In many ways Lent is easier for a family to focus on than Advent: there is no shopping and gift-giving to distract us. On the other hand, the forty days of Lent can seem like a long time for adults, and certainly for children.

Why *forty* days? Big changes take time. From the rain in Noah's day to the Israelites' wandering in the desert to Jesus' time in the desert before the start of his public life, forty has been associated with a time of cleansing, a time to step back and re-form our lives so that God is *really* the center.

Lent is a time to prepare to celebrate New Life all around us in spring and in the Resurrection of Jesus. We offer the following suggestions to help your family observe this season well; please feel free to adapt what is here to the unique character and needs of your family. May your Lent be a time when your family draws together in prayerful preparation for Easter.

Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras, or Shrove Tuesday, is the day before Lent begins. In many European cultures and in parts of Louisiana this is a time to feast and party before the serious season of Lent. One way for a family to mark the fact that a different season is about to begin—a time of preparation for Easter—is to celebrate Mardi Gras. One way to celebrate Mardi Gras popular in the British Isles is to serve pancakes for the evening meal as a way to remember that something different is beginning.

In French, Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday" because during the Middle Ages, the severe Lenten fast forbade the use of oil, all dairy products and eggs. By Mardi Gras, these foods needed to be used up. Neither was meat eaten, hence Mardi Gras was time for a "farewell to meat," in Latin carne vale, carnival.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Many churches celebrate this day by tracing a cross of ashes on each person's forehead. Often the palms from last year's Palm Sunday are burned to make the ashes that are used. The cross of ashes is then traced on each person's forehead with the words, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return," or "Reform your lives and believe in the Good News," or something similar.

Ash Wednesday at home is a good time for each person to decide how to live the Gospel message during Lent. Will family members choose something special to do around the house to serve others, something that is not part of their usual chores? Or will the family as a whole choose some way to serve Christ in a special way this Lent, perhaps by helping someone in the neighborhood? The family may decide to limit or eliminate TV during Lent in order to spend time in other activities.

Here's a possibility for any family: how about spending one TV-free evening a week just being together as a family, with each family member taking a turn at choosing a shared activity and refreshments, perhaps beginning

with a prayer together? One night you might play "Bible Charades"—have family members act out their favorite passage of Scripture, and see who can guess what it is.

You may even want to mark Ash Wednesday with your own ritual to complement the one from church. Parental supervision is a must here, but it can be done safely. Read from Scripture (such as Matt. 6:1-21) and then have each person write on a slip of paper what he or she will do differently during Lent. After family members write down their resolution and fold it, place the slips in a heatproof bowl and carefully set it afire. After the ashes cool, each person signs with ashes the person next to him or her.

Planting Seeds

One way to help spring along and have a good reminder of Lent in your midst is to plant seeds indoors, usually a plant that can be planted outside later. Marigolds or beans are good candidates. You'll need paper cups, some potting soil and seeds. As you plant the seeds, read this verse prayerfully: "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies,

it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

Talk about how Jesus gave his life for us and calls us to do the same. Then carefully water your seeds (not too much!), put them in a well-lighted place, and watch new life happen as the days roll by.

An old Easter song expresses the miracle:

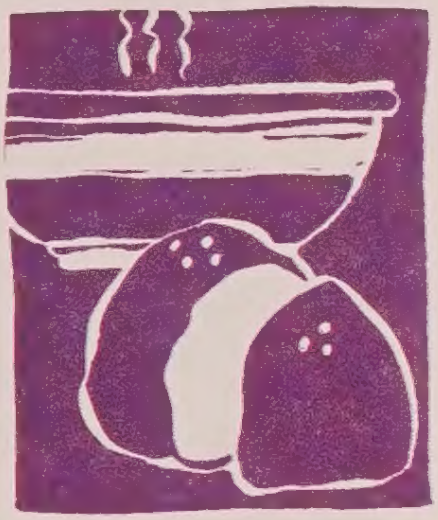
Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth many days hath lain,
Love comes again that with the dead had been,
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.

Pretzels

For years at our house Lent has meant pretzels, not the straight sticks but the curved ones. Here's why: pretzels originated as a simple Lenten bread when people fasted from milk, butter and eggs. The pretzel was a reminder of the need for prayer because they were shaped in the form of arms crossed in prayer, an older posture than folded hands. The word "pretzel" comes from

the Latin *bracellae,* which means "little arms." Each night at dinner a pretzel by each person's place is a simple reminder that Lent is a time for prayer.

Simple Meal



Lent is also observed as a special time for fasting and almsgiving, for sharing what we have with those less fortunate than we are. One way to do this is to have a simple meal—perhaps soup and bread—one night a week and contribute the money we might have spent on a more elaborate meal into a small box or container. Talk over as a family where to donate the money at the end of Lent, perhaps to a food pantry or a group working with the homeless.

Lenten Map or Butterfly

For young children who have a hard time waiting forty days, a way to see "how much longer until Easter" may be helpful. The family artist may want to draw forty footsteps between Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday (not counting Sundays) so that one may be colored each day.

Another way to do this is to draw a butterfly that begins as a caterpillar with only the body colored. Each wing would have twenty sections outlined but not yet colored in. As the forty days go by, color in a different part of the wing each day until the butterfly, which seems to "die" when it enters the tomblike cocoon, is ready to fly away full of new life at Easter.

Lenten Centerpiece

A table decoration reminding us that it is Lent can be very helpful. Two possibilities are a Lenten cross and a Lenten tree.

Some families use a flat cross with six small vigil candles on it, one for each week of Lent. A candle is lit for each week of Lent, including the current week, just as is done with the candles on an Advent wreath.

Another centerpiece could be a small bare branch from a shrub or a tree. Family members may tape a homemade "leaf" (cut from green construction paper) to the branch for each day of Lent. Or leaves can be attached whenever family members act on a Lenten resolution. Each day of Lent then brings us a little closer to the "living"

branch at Easter, at which time colored paper eggs or "blossoms" can be attached to the tree for a Paschal centerpiece.

Scripture During Lent

Lent provides an important opportunity to hear God's word in a new way, calling us to conversion, a change of heart. One way to help the family be more aware of this call is to place a weekly quotation from Scripture in a prominent place, such as on the refrigerator. Here are some suggestions:

Ash Wednesday: "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Matt. 6:17-18

First Week: "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:11

Second Week: "'Lord, if another sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy- seven

times.'" Matt. 18:21-22

Third Week: "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." Matt. 5:23-24

Fourth Week: "But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him." Luke 15:20

Fifth Week: "'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'" John 8:7

Holy Week: "'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'" Luke 23:34

Looking for Signs of New Life

Young children are especially good at helping the taller ones see the signs of new life that begin to pop out in the spring, first the buds and new leaves, then bugs and worms. Take time once a week during Lent to go for a walk and look for ways that the world is waking up after a long winter sleep. In just this way, New Life in Jesus overcomes sin and death in the world.

Palm Sunday

Palm or Passion Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, the celebration of Jesus' last days with his disciples and the love that he showed for them. Many churches on this day use palms and read the Gospel account of Jesus' triumphal ride into Jerusalem.

When our children were little, we brought the palms home from church and played a recording of a song we liked about Palm Sunday. We marched around the house waving our palms, playing any "rhythm instruments" we could find, most of which were pots and pans. We were amazed when the oldest, then still a preschooler, said, "This is just like the parade they had for Jesus when he entered Jerusalem!" Perhaps such a parade would work at your house, especially with younger children. It's good to explain that "Hosanna!" is another way to say "Hooray!"

With older children you can talk about the fact that the crowd that cheered Jesus would later be yelling, "Crucify him!" Discuss, too, how it can be dangerous to go along with the crowd.

Three Special Days: The Paschal Triduum

Holy Thursday—or Maundy Thursday—Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are three of the most special days of the Christian year. Any or all of these can be celebrated at home to highlight the key events in the Christian story.

Holy Thursday

The Last Supper Jesus had with the apostles is easy to remember at dinner by serving some flatbread or matzoh (usually found in the cracker or deli section of the supermarket) and some grape juice. We use a special plate and cup for this at our house. Tell in your own words what Jesus did with his friends before he was arrested and put to death. (You may prefer to read Mark 14:22-25.)

Some families may also wash one another's feet or hands as part of their celebration. (A good reading here is John 13:3-15.)

Good Friday

Although we live in a society that would rather deny death, our Christian tradition tells us that we

must die to really live. Surprisingly, even young children are ready to look at questions about death, including that of Jesus. When our children were preschoolers, they amazed us with their interest in acting out the story of Jesus' passion and death. You might want to try "Steps to Calvary" as they are listed here, or you may prefer to read the full passage or talk briefly about the reflection question included for each "step." Use these in whatever way works best in your family.

First Step: Jesus Prays in the Garden of Olives (Luke 22:39-46).

Have you ever been faced with a tough choice? Did praying about it help?

Second Step: Jesus is Betrayed by Judas (Matt. 26:45-49).

Have you ever betrayed—been unfaithful to—what you knew was right? How were you letting down yourself as well as God?

Third Step: Jesus is Condemned to Death by the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:56, 61-64).

Did you ever feel unjustly judged by others?

Fourth Step: Jesus is Denied by Peter (Luke 22:54-62).

Have you ever denied God in your life by the way you acted or thought?

Fifth Step: Jesus is Judged by Pilate (Luke 23:20-25).

Have you ever given in to pressure from others?

Sixth Step: Jesus is Flogged and Crowned with Thorns (John 19:1-3).

Can you trust in God when you feel most alone?

Seventh Step: Jesus Carries His Cross (John 19:17).

What is your cross? What burden are you carrying?

Eighth Step: Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:20-21).

Is there anyone whose cross you could help carry?

Ninth Step: Jesus Encounters the Women of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-31).

How do you suffer when you speak the truth as Jesus did?

Tenth Step: Jesus is Crucified (Mark 15:22-26).

What are you willing to give your life for?

Eleventh Step: Jesus Promises to Share His Reign with the Good Thief (Luke 23:39-43).

Can you accept Jesus' forgiveness yourself?

Twelfth Step: Jesus is on the Cross with His Mother and Disciple Below (John 19:25-27).

Can you accept the others God gives you to love?

Thirteenth Step: Jesus Dies on the Cross (Matt. 27:45-50).

Can you imagine how much God loves you?

Fourteenth Step: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb (Matt. 27:57-61).

Where do you see the risen Christ present in your life?

Holy Saturday: Remembering Baptism

Holy Saturday is an especially appropriate time to reflect on our baptism and who we are as Christians, since this is traditionally the day that new Christians are admitted into the community after having completed a time of preparation.

During dinner this evening, tell the stories of the baptisms of family members. Some families have a special baptismal candle or garment; bring those out, as well as any pictures from the baptisms. Talk together about how you have been faithful to your promise to love others as God loves you. Talk, too, about times you have failed to love. Conclude with the Lord's Prayer while holding hands.

As you look ahead to celebrating the fifty days of the Easter season, you can continue talking about what it means to live the New Life of Christ as a family.

We know that Christ, once raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin, once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:9-11

Lent At Home was written by Kathy and Mitch Finley for Creative Communications for the Parish © 1996. Illustrations by Sally Beck. Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. 1-800-325-9414. Printed in the U.S.A. **LF-1**

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

FORTY QUESTIONS FOR LENT

Meditations from the Writings of

Frederick Buechner

From Death To Life

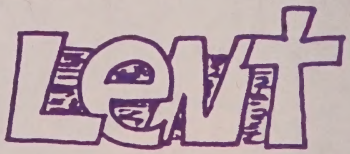
FORTY QUESTIONS FOR LENT

Meditations from the Writings of

FREDERICK BUECHNER

Lent traditionally is a time of spiritual renewal. During these 40 days Christians are urged to pray and to meditate anew on the Gospel accounts of Christ's redemptive passion and death. If we open our hearts to God's Word this Lent, we will discover many spiritual life-or-death questions asked of each one of us. **Am I Really Trying to Love God? Do I Act As If I'll Never Die? Am I Willing To Repent? Do I Really Love Anyone Besides Myself?** Such are the questions about faith, hope, love, prayer and other topics posed in this book—questions to help readers move from death to life.

The 40 questions flow from the themes of the 40 daily reflections selected from the works of critically acclaimed author **Frederick Buechner.** (The prayers for each Sunday of Lent also are from the pen of Buechner.) Each daily question and reflection is accompanied by an appropriate Lenten Scripture text and a brief concluding prayer. Readers are urged to spend a few moments in silent meditation after reading each devotion. □



Creative Communications for the Parish expresses thanks to Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., for graciously granting permission to excerpt material from the following books: ***A Room Called Remember,*** © 1984 by Frederick Buechner; ***Now & Then,*** © 1983 by Frederick Buechner; ***Peculiar Treasures: A Biblical Who's Who,*** © 1979 by Frederick Buechner; ***Telling the Truth,*** © 1977 by Frederick Buechner; ***The Alphabet of Grace,*** © 1970 by Frederick Buehner; ***The Hungering Dark,*** © 1969 by Frederick Buechner; ***The Magnificent Defeat,*** © 1966 by Frederick Buechner; ***The Sacred Journey,*** © 1982 by Frederick Buechner; ***Whistling in the Dark: An ABC Theologized,*** © 1988 by Frederick Buechner and ***Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC,*** © 1973 by Frederick Buechner. □

What Would I Do If This Were My Last Day?

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Joel 2:12-13

In many cultures there is an ancient custom of giving a tenth of each year's income to some holy use. For Christians, to observe the forty days of Lent is to do the same thing with roughly a tenth of each year's days. After being baptized by John in the River Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent forty days asking himself what it meant to be Jesus. During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves.

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and who do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in 25 words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes you happiest?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?

To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become.

● **Jesus, help me this Ash Wednesday to examine carefully the kind of life I'm living, what I'm doing and failing to do. But help me even more fervently to meditate on *your* life and *your* death, on the salvation you bring.**

Do I Act As If I'll Never Die?

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live. Deuteronomy 30:19

One life is all we get, at least only one life here, only one life in this gorgeous and hair-raising world, only one life with the range of possibilities for doing and being that are open to us now. William Hazlitt wrote that no young man believes he will ever die, and the truth of the matter, I think, is that in some measure that is true of all. Intellectually we all know that we will die, but we do not really know it in the sense that the knowledge becomes part of us. We do not really know it in the sense of living as though it were true. On the contrary, we tend to live as though our lives would go on forever. We spend our lives like drunken sailors.

One life on this earth is all we get, and the obvious conclusion would seem to be that at the very least we are fools if we do not live it as fully and bravely and beautifully as we can.

● **Jesus, may I be mindful during Lent how precious life is—and also how precious is the eternal life you have given me!**

Am I Ignoring the Deeper Issues of Life?

What must I do to inherit eternal life? Luke 10:25

We are much involved with questions about things that matter a good deal today but will be forgotten by this time tomorrow—the immediate *wheres* and *whens* and *hows* that face us daily at home and at work—but at the same time we tend to lose track of the questions about things that matter always—life-and-death questions about meaning, purpose, value. To lose track of such deep questions as these is to risk losing track of who we really are in our own depths and where we are really going. There is perhaps no stronger reason for reading the Bible than that there awaits each reader the one question which, though for years he may have been pretending not to hear it, is the central question of his own life.

When you hear the question that is your question, then you have already begun to hear much. Whether you can accept the Bible's answer or not, you have reached the point where at least you can begin to hear it too.

● **Jesus, forgive the countless times I have avoided hearing the questions you ask me in your Word. Help me this Lent to hear the questions and to respond to them.**

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Am I Willing To Be Sanctified?

For this is the will of God, your sanctification. 1 Thessalonians 4:3

In the experience of St. Paul, it is only when a person discovers that God really loves him in all his unloveliness that he himself starts to become godlike. Paul's word for this gradual transformation of a sow's ear into a silk purse is *sanctification,* and he sees it as the second stage in the process of salvation.

Being sanctified is a long and painful stage because with part of himself the sinner prefers his sin, just as with part of himself the beast prefers his glistening snout and curved tusks. Many drop out with the job hardly more than begun, and among those who stay with it there are few if any who don't drag their feet most of the way.

But little by little—less by taking pains than by taking it easy—the forgiven man starts to become a forgiving man, the healed man to become a healing man, the loved man to become a loving man. God does most of it. The end of the process, Paul says, is eternal life.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

Ephesians 1:3-4

Sunday, The First Week of Lent

O God in Christ, there is no ground anywhere that is not holy ground, for in the cool of the evening you have walked upon it and in the heat of the day you have died upon it, and at the coming of dawn you have returned and are always and everywhere returning to it and to us who walk upon it too, this holy ground, though heedless of its holiness. O make us whole. Set us free.

You shaped us each in the darkness of a womb to give us life and you know us each by name, and not one is forgotten by you, everyone is precious in your sight—the ugly with the beautiful, the criminal with the child, the enemy with the friend. Lord, give us eyes to see each other and ourselves more nearly as you see us, to see beneath each face we meet, and beneath even our own faces, your face.

Help us to know that for each one of us you have died as though that one were the only one. Amen.

Monday, The First Week of Lent

Have I Turned God Into An Idol?

My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways. Isaiah 55:8-9

The world hides God from us, or we hide ourselves from God, or for reasons of his own God hides himself from us, but however you account for it, he is often more conspicuous by his absence than by his presence, and his absence is much of what we labor under and are heavy laden by. Just as sacramental theology speaks of a doctrine of the Real Presence, maybe it should speak also of a doctrine of the Real Absence because absence can be sacramental, too, a door left open, a chamber of the heart kept ready and waiting.

It is out of the whirlwind that Job first hears God say, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 42:3). It is out of the absence of God that God makes himself present, and it is not just the whirlwind that stands for his absence, not just the storm and chaos of the world that shatters all attempts to find God in the world, but God is absent

also from all Job's words about God, and from the words of his comforters, because they are words without knowledge that obscure the issue of God by trying to define him as present in ways and places where he is not present, to define him as moral order, as the best answer one can give to the problem of human life. God is not an answer people can give, God says. God himself does not give answers. He gives himself, and into the midst of the whirlwind of his absence he gives himself.

● **O Holy and Awesome God, you are not at anyone's beck and call to give answers. Yet you have spoken in the life and death of your Son. Help me to know Jesus better and to follow him more faithfully.**

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Where Is My True Home?

For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Hebrews 13:14

A famous scientist some years ago gave a definitive answer as to what the cosmos is. "The cosmos," he said, "is all there is or ever was or ever will be." Which means that if you want to understand the cosmos, there is nothing other than the cosmos itself that you can look to for your answer. There is only one thing you can say to such a view and that is that it is wrong . . . For a human being to say that the cosmos is all there is strikes me as like a worm in an apple saying that the apple is all there is. Even if we could solve all the problems of the cosmos and stood here healthy, solvent, adjusted and proud in our knowledge at last, we would still stand here with the muck on our shoes and the feeling in the pit of our stomachs that the cosmos can never entirely be home because we know as surely as we know anything that though we have never seen it except in dreams, our true home lies somewhere else.

● **O God, may I always remember that my true home is with you in heaven no matter how often I act as if my true home is on earth.**

Am I Honestly Trying To Love God?

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:4

"Love God." We have heard the words so often that we no longer hear them. They are too loud to hear, too big to take in. We know the words so much by heart that we scarcely know them any longer as words spoken to the heart out of a mystery beyond all knowing. We take the words so much for granted that we hardly stop to wonder where they are seeking to take us. Above all else, the words say, you shall love—not, first your neighbor as yourself because that is second and comes later. On the contrary, it is God you shall love first before you love anything else, and you shall love him with all that you are and all that you have in you to become—whatever that means, whatever that involves. The words don't explain. They just proclaim and command . . . God in his full glory and power, we have not seen and cannot see, and yet it is he whom we are commanded to love above all others.

● **O Loving Father, I have failed to keep before me this first and most solemn command—loving you. I resolve this Lent to remind myself of it daily.**

Do I Ever Really Listen To God?

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. Revelation 3:20

Do we even know what loving God looks like and feels like—not just taking comfort in him as an idea, not just believing in him as a possibility, not just worshipping him, but actually loving him; wanting at least to be near him, wanting at least to do things for him, because that is the least of what love seems to mean?

If we have not seen God, maybe we can say at least that we have heard him. Maybe "hearing" is a better metaphor than "seeing" and certainly a more Biblical one because hearing takes place in time; we listen to one word following another in time, and it is in time, in the day-by-day event

of our own times and of historic time, that God makes himself known to us. And in this sense of "hearing," we can sometimes believe that we have heard him for ourselves. We have heard him in Scripture—in the passion of Jeremiah, the crying out of Job, the love of Christ. We have heard him in history. We have heard him in our own inner histories—our own passion, our own crying out, our own love.

● **Lord, may the prayer of Samuel be always on my lips this Lent: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."**

FRIDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Am I Convinced God Loves Me?

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10

To love God is not a goal we have to struggle toward on our own because what at its heart the Gospel is all about is that God himself moves us toward it even when we believe he has forsaken us.

The final secret, I think, is this: that the words "You shall love the Lord your God" become in the end less a command than a promise. And the promise is that, yes, on the weary feet of faith and the fragile wings of hope, we will come to love him at last as from the first he has loved us—loved us even in the wilderness, especially in the wilderness, because he has been in the wilderness with us. He has been in the wilderness for us. He has been acquainted with our grief.

● **O God, make my love for you grow ever stronger—but more importantly still, make my awareness and conviction that you love me grow stronger because that is what matters most!**

SATURDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Do I Pray To Know God's Love?

Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24

If we are really seeking to know the power of God's love, then I have one thing to say—ask for it. There is something in me that recoils a little at speaking so directly and childishly, but I speak this way anyway because it is the most important thing I have in me to say. Ask, and you will receive. And there is the other side of it too: if you have never known

the power of God's love, then maybe it is because you have never asked to know it—I mean really asked, expecting an answer.

I am saying just this: go to him the way the father of the sick boy in the Gospels did and ask him. Pray to him, is what I am saying. In whatever words you have. and if the little voice that inside all of us as the inheritance of generations of unfaith, if this little voice inside says, "But I don't believe. I don't believe," don't worry too much. Just keep on anyway. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief," is the best any of us can do really, but thank God it is enough.

When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord. Jeremiah 29:13-14

The Second Sunday of Lent

O God, help us never to mistake success for victory or failure for defeat. Grant that we may never be entirely content with whatever bounty the world may bestow upon us, but that we may know at last that we were created not for happiness but for joy, and that joy is to those alone who, sometimes with tears in their eyes, commit themselves in love to you and to their brothers and sisters. Lead us and all your world ever deeper into the knowledge that finally all people are one and that there can never really be joy for any until there is joy for all. In Christ's name we ask it and for his sake. Amen.

MONDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

What Kind of Peace Do I Seek?

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

True peace, the high and bidding peace that passeth all understanding, is to be had not in retreat from the battle, but only in the thick of the

battle. To journey for the sake of saving our own lives is little by little to cease to live in any sense that really matters, even to ourselves, because it is only by journeying for the world's sake—even when the world bores and sickens and scares you half to death—that little by little we start to come alive. This was not a conclusion that I came to in time. It was a conclusion from beyond time that came to me. God knows I have never been any good at following the road it pointed me to, but at least, by grace, I glimpsed the road and saw that it is the only one worth travelling.

● **Forgive me, Jesus, for the many times I run from the thick of the battle and seek a false peace by avoiding problems rather than by confronting them.**

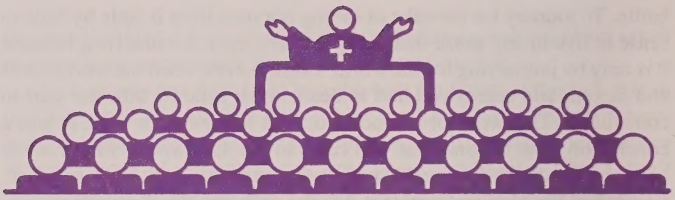
TUESDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Can I Save Myself?

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 5:3

When it comes to putting broken lives back together—when it comes, in religious terms, to the saving of souls—the human best tends to be at odds with the holy best. To do for yourself the best that you have it in you to do—to grit your teeth and clench your fists in order to survive the world at its harshest and worst—is, by that very act, to be unable to let something be done for you and in you that is more wonderful still. The trouble with steeling yourself against the harshness of reality is that the same steel that secures your life against being destroyed secures your life also against being opened up and transformed by the holy power that life itself comes from. You can survive on your own. You can grow strong on your own. You can even prevail on your own. But you cannot become human on your own. Surely that is why, in Jesus' sad joke, the rich man has as hard a time getting into Paradise as that camel through the needle's eye because with his credit card in his pocket, the rich man is so effective at getting for himself everything he needs that he does not see that what he needs more than anything else in the world can be had only as a gift. He does not see that the one thing a clenched fist cannot do is accept, even from God, a helping hand.

● **O Jesus, the crucified One who submitted yourself to helplessness, how often I act as if I am self-sufficient! Give me the grace this Lent to see how helpless I am to gain my ultimate need—salvation.**



Wednesday, The Second Week of Lent

Am I Willing to Repent?

Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Romans 2:4

To repent is to come to your senses. It is not so much something you do as something that happens. True repentance spends less time looking at the past and saying, "I'm sorry," than to the future and saying, "Wow!"

● **Jesus, help me to come to my senses this Lent and welcome into my life the gifts of redemption that are mine as a child of God.**

Thursday, The Second Week of Lent

Do I Get Bored Too Easily?

I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. Revelation 3:15

Boredom (sloth) is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. It deserves the honor. You can be bored by virtually anything if you put your mind to it, or choose not to. You can yawn your way through *Don Giovanni* or a trip to the Grand Canyon or an afternoon with your dearest friend or a sunset. There are doubtless those who nodded off at the coronation of Napoleon or the trial of Joan of Arc or when Shakespeare appeared at the Globe in *Hamlet* or Lincoln delivered himself of a few remarks at Gettysburg. The odds are the Sermon on the Mount had more than few of the congregation twitchy and glassy-eyed . . . To be bored is to turn down cold whatever life happens to be offering you at the moment. It is to cast a jaundiced eye at life in general including your own life. You feel nothing is worth getting excited about because you are yourself not worth getting excited about.

● **Jesus, when I am inclined to be bored, wake me up to the countless marvels and delights of nature and of grace all around me!**

Friday, The Second Week of Lent

Am I Open to Gifts of Joy?

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Isaiah 13:3

Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is man-made—a happy home, a happy marriage, a happy relationship with our friends and with our jobs. We work for these things, and if we are careful and wise and lucky, we can usually achieve them. Happiness is one of the highest achievements of which we are capable, and when it is ours, we take credit for it, and properly so. But we never take credit for our moments of joy because we know that they are not man-made and that we are never really responsible for them. They come when they come. They are always sudden and quick and unrepeatable. The unspeakable joy sometimes of just being alive. The miracle sometimes of being just who we are with the blue sky and the green grass, the faces of our friends and the waves of the ocean, being just what they are. The joy of release, of being suddenly well when before we were sick, of being forgiven when before we were ashamed and afraid, of finding ourselves loved when we were lost and alone. The joy of love, which is the joy of the flesh as well as the spirit.

● **Jesus, keep my heart ever open to the divine gifts of joy that come my way each day.**

Saturday, The Second Week of Lent

Am I A Joyful and Grateful Christian?

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11

Joy is always all-encompassing; there is nothing left over to hate with or to be afraid with, to feel guilty with or to be selfish about. Joy is where the whole being is pointed in one direction, and it is something that by its nature a man never hoards but always wants to share. Joy also is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes. Even nailed to a tree.

Jesus says that men are made for joy and that anyone who is truly joyous has a right to say that he is doing God's will on this earth. Where you have known joy, you have known him.

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice . . . Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. 1 Chronicles 16:31, 34

The Third Sunday of Lent

Lord, catch us off guard today. Surprise us with some moment of beauty or pain so that for at least a moment we may be startled into seeing that you are with us here in all your splendor, always and everywhere, barely hidden, beneath, beyond, within this life we breathe.

When we meet as men and women, help us also to see beneath the differences of gender to our common humanity, our common needs, so that we may love and serve each other fully. Open our hearts to the knowledge that beneath our hunger for one another lies a deeper hunger yet, a deeper emptiness which finally only you can fill. Open our hearts to the knowledge that we can be fully each others only when we are fully yours. Amen.

MONDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Do I Find God in Everyday Events?

The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.
1 Corinthians 2:10

There is no event so commonplace but that God is present within it, always hiddenly, always leaving you room to recognize him or not to recognize him, but all the more fascinatingly because of that, all the more compellingly and hauntingly.

Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.

● **Holy Spirit, you who see all and know all, give me the wisdom to see the Father and to know him through everyday events of my life.**

Tuesday, the Third Week of Lent

What Does Faith Mean to Me?

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

Faith is different from theology because theology is reasoned and systematic and orderly, whereas faith is disorderly and intermittent and full of surprises. Faith is different from mysticism because mystics in their ecstasy become one with what faith can at most see only from afar, as that passage from Hebrews says. Faith is different from ethics because ethics is primarily concerned not, like faith, with our relationship with God but with our relationship with each other. I think maybe faith is closest to worship because, like worship, it is essentially a response to God. It involves the emotions and the physical senses as well as the mind. But worship is consistent, structured, single-minded and seems to know what it's doing, while faith is a stranger, an exile on earth, and doesn't know for certain about anything. Faith is homesickness. Faith is a lump in the throat. Faith is less a position on than a movement toward—less a sure thing than a hunch. Faith is waiting. Faith is journeying.

● **O God, I often want to make my faith orderly, predictable and "safe." But that is not necessarily what real faith implies. Help me to realize that responding faithfully may often disrupt my life.**

Wednesday, The Third Week of Lent

Do I Understand the Meaning of Grace?

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8

A crucial eccentricity of the Christian faith is the assertion that people are saved by grace. There's nothing *you* have to do. There's nothing you *have* to do. There's nothing you have to *do.*

The grace of God means something like this: Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are, because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you.

There is only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it.

● **Dear Father, thank you for your wondrous gifts!**

THURSDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

When Does Eternal Life Begin?

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. John 17:3

This side of Paradise, people are with God in such a remote and spotty way that their experience of Eternal Life is at best like the experience you get of a place approaching it at night in a fast train. Even the saints see only an occasional light go whipping by, hear only a sound or two over the clatter of the rails. The rest of us aren't awake enough to see as much as that, or we're mumbling over our nightcaps in the club car.

But the day will break and the train will pull into the station, and the ones who have managed to stay with it will finally alight.

We think of Eternal Life as what happens when life ends. We would do better to think of it as what happens when life begins.

● **O Lord, help me to appreciate and live more fully the eternal life I have been given.**

FRIDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Do I Always Play It Safe?

Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:39

Auto inspection stickers used to have printed on the back, "Drive carefully—the life you save may be your own." That is human wisdom in a nutshell. What God says, on the other hand, is, "The life you save is the life you lose." In other words, the life you clutch, hoard, guard, and play safe with is in the end a life worth little to anybody, including yourself, and only a life given away for love's sake is a life worth living. To bring his point home, God shows us a man who gave his life away to the extent of dying a national disgrace without a penny in the bank or a friend to his name. In terms of human wisdom, he was a Perfect Fool, and anybody who thinks he can follow him without making something like the same kind of a fool of himself is laboring under not a cross but a delusion.

● **Jesus, may your passion, death and resurrection make me bold in seeking truth, justice and holiness—especially when I am fearful of looking foolish in the world's eyes.**

Do I Really Love Anyone Besides Myself?

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7

When you love somebody, it is no longer yourself who is the center of your own universe. It is the one you love who is. You forget yourself. You deny yourself. You give of yourself so that by all the rules of arithmetical logic there should be less of yourself than there was to start with. Only by a curious paradox there is more. You feel that at last you really are yourself. You give up your old self-seeking self for somebody you love and thereby become yourself at last. You must die with Christ so that you can rise with him, Paul says. It is what baptism is all about.

You do not love God so that, tit for tat, he will then save you. To love God is to be saved. To love anybody is a significant step along the way. You do not love God and live for him so you will go to Heaven. Whichever side of the grave you are talking about, to love God and live for him is Heaven. It is a gift, not an achievement. You can make youself moral. You can make yourself religious. But you can't make yourself love.

● **Jesus, I know I cannot love truly without your grace. Help me this Lent to begin loving as I ought.**

Sunday, the Fourth Week of Lent

Guide us, we pray, down the unknown corridor of this day and every day. Lead us, each one, to the one door of all the many doors that you would have us open. Give us courage to speak there the word you would have us speak of love and of healing. Give us ears to hear you speak at every turning of the way—to listen, to hear and to obey, even when the heart within us faints. Help us to live this day as though it were the first of all our days or the last of all our days. Amen.

MONDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Who or What Do I Obey?

Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart. Psalm 40:7-8

In recent times, "obedience" has become a bad word. It seems incompatible with good words like "independence," "individualism" and "freedom." The emphasis is all on doing your own thing and doing it your own way. In religious circles, obedience, like its partners poverty and chastity, tends to be associated largely with monasticism. If one is told by one's superior to do something, one better do it. Otherwise you let your own conscience be your guide and take no guff from anybody. The phrase "obeying your conscience" is gradually being replaced by "listening to your conscience."

It is generally supposed that to obey somebody is necessarily to do something for somebody else's sake. That is a tragic misunderstanding. When Jesus asks people to obey above everything the Law of Love, it is above everything for their own sakes that he is asking them to obey it.

● **O Jesus, you who were obedient even unto death, revive in me a holy and healthy sense of the need for obedience to your Word.**

Tuesday, the Fourth Week of Lent

Is Love Necessary?

Whoever does not love abides in death. 1 John 3:14

When Jesus says that whoever would save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will save it, surely he is not making a statement about how, morally speaking, life *ought* to be. Rather he is making a statement about how life *is*. When John writes that he who does not love remains in death, he is not pronouncing an ethical judgment but a universal insight into what it means to be human. Behind all such words is the conviction that God has created life in such a way that if one lives in defiance of God's law then that person invites destruction as surely as anyone who lives in defiance of the law of gravity invites it.

Not to love is, psychically, spiritually, to die. To live for yourself alone, hoarding your life for your own sake, is in almost every sense that matters to reduce your life to one hardly worth living, and so lose it.

● **Jesus, help me this Lent to reflect deeply on your life, passion and death so that I may gain a greater appreciation of the divine Law of Love—and live it.**

Wednesday, the Fourth Week of Lent

Is Love Primarily Emotional?

Let us love, not in word or speech , but in truth and action.
1 John 3:18

Love is not primarily an emotion but an act of the will. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbors, he is not telling us to love them in the sense of responding to them with a cozy emotional feeling. You can as well produce a cozy emotional feeling on demand as you can a yawn or a sneeze. On the contrary, he is telling us to love our neighbors in the sense of being willing to work for their well-being even if it means sacrificing our own well-being to that end, even if it means sometimes just leaving them alone. So in Jesus' terms we can love our neighbors without necessarily liking them.

● **Jesus, in this era when the word "love" is so tainted, help me not only to think straight about love but to love as honestly as you would have me love.**

Thursday, The Fourth Week of Lent

Do I Believe That Love Is From God?

God is love and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 1 John 4:16

Love is not really a human power. People cannot achieve love, generate love, wield love, as they do their powers of destruction and creation. When I love someone, it is not something that I have achieved, but something that is happening through me, something that is happening to me as well as to the beloved. To use the old soap-opera cliche seriously, it is something bigger than both of us, infinitely bigger, because wherever love enters this world, God enters.

● **Jesus, may my Lenten observances help dissolve in me the sins and weaknesses that keep me from loving—that keep love from working through me.**

Friday, The Fourth Week of Lent

Am I Compassionate?

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.

Colossians 3:12

Compassion is the sometimes fatal capacity for feeling what it's like to live inside somebody else's skin . . . It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too.

. . . True humility doesn't consist of thinking ill of yourself but of not thinking of yourself much differently from the way you'd be apt to think of anybody else. It is the capacity for being no more and no less pleased when you do something well as when others (even your opponents) do.

● **Jesus, I am often so engrossed in my own problems that I fail even to observe others, much less to feel any genuine compassion or to respond to them compassionately. Free me from the tyranny that keeps me locked within my own concerns.**

Can I Really Love My Enemies?

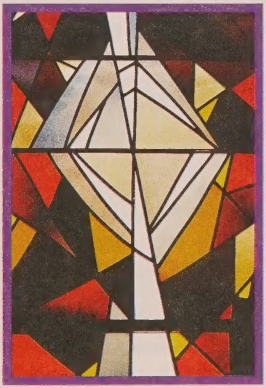
I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:44

Jesus says we are to love our enemies and pray for them, meaning love not in an emotional sense but in the sense of willing their good, which is the sense in which we love ourselves. It is a tall order even so. The South African black love the lords of apartheid? The longtime employee who is laid off just before he qualifies for retirement with a pension love the people who call him in to break the news? The mother of the molested child love the molester? But when you see as clearly as that who your enemies are, at least you see your enemies clearly too.

You see the lines in their faces and the way they walk when they're tired. You see who their husbands and wives are maybe. You see where they're vulnerable. You see where they're scared. Seeing what is hateful about them you may catch a glimpse also of where the hatefulness comes from. Seeing the hurt they cause you, you may see also the hurt they cause themselves. You're still light years away from loving them, to be sure, but at least you see how they are human even as you are human, and that is at least a step in the right direction. It's possible that you may even get to where you can pray for them a little, if only that God forgive them because you yourself can't, but any prayer for them at all is a major breakthrough.

● **O Lord, help me to see the humanity of those who have offended me or harmed me so that I may begin one day to love them.**



The Fifth Sunday of Lent

How can we pray to you, the holy and hidden God, whose ways are not our ways, who reigns in awful mystery beyond the realm of space and time? Yet how can we not pray, pray to you, Heavenly Father, who knows what it is to be human because you have walked among us as a man, breaking with us the bread of our afflictions and drinking deep the cup of our despair? How can we not pray to you when it is your very Spirit alive within us that moves our lips in prayer?

Hear, O God, the prayers of all your children everywhere: for forgiveness and healing, for courage, for faith; prayers for the needs of others; prayers for peace among the desperate nations. Whether you give or withhold what we ask, whether you answer us in words that burn like fire or in silence that burns like fire, increase in us the knowledge that you are always more near to us than breathing, that your will for us is love.

And deep beneath all our asking, so deep beneath that we are all but deaf to it ourselves, hear, O God, the secret song of every human heart praising you for being what you are, rejoicing with the morning stars that you are our God and we your children. Make strong and wild this secret song within until it bursts forth at last to your glory and our saving. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday, The Fifth Week of Lent

How Persistent Am I in Prayer?

Everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Luke 11:10

According to Jesus, by far the most important thing about praying is to keep at it. The images he uses to explain this are all rather comic, as though he thought it was rather comic to have to explain it at all. He says God is like a friend you go to borrow bread from at midnight. The friend tells you in effect to drop dead, but you go on knocking anyway until finally he gives you what you want so he can go back to bed again. (Luke 11:5-8) Or God is like a crooked judge who refused to hear the case of a certain poor widow, presumably because he knows there's nothing much in it for him. But she keeps on hounding him until finally he hears her case just to get her out of his hair. (Luke 18:1-8) Even a stinker, Jesus says, won't give his own child a black eye when he asks for peanut butter and jelly, so how all the more will God respond. (Matthew 7:9-11) Be importunate, Jesus says—not, one assumes, because you have to beat a path to God's door before he'll open it, but because until you beat the path maybe

there's no way of getting to *your* door. "Ravish my heart," John Donne wrote. But God will not usually ravish. He will only court.

● **Jesus, you know that my devotion to prayer is weak at best. May I learn this Lent to turn to you in prayer frequently.**

TUESDAY, THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Do I Really Recognize My Own Need?

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

We are all hungry and in need, but most of us don't recognize it. With plenty to eat in the deepfreeze, with a roof over our heads and a car in the garage, we assume that the empty feeling inside must be just a case of the blues that can be cured by a weekend in the country or an extra martini at lunch or the purchase of a color TV.

The poor, on the other hand, are under no such delusion. When Jesus says, "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28) the poor stand a better chance than most of knowing what he's talking about and knowing that he's talking to them. In desperation they may even be willing to consider the possibility of accepting his offer. This is perhaps why Jesus on several occasions called them peculiarly blessed.

● **Jesus, may my Lenten devotion help me realize that my deepest and most hard-to-fill needs are spiritual needs that only *you* can fill.**

Wednesday, The Fifth Week of Lent

How Do I React To the Words 'Jesus Saves'?

There is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:22-23

When we see a sign in public declaring that *Jesus Saves,* we wince because we are embarrassed. It is embarrassing because what it says to everybody who passes by and most importantly and unforgivably of all, of course, what it says to you is that you *need* to be saved. Rich man, poor man; young man, old man; educated and uneducated; religious and unreligious—the word is in its way an offense to all of them, all of us, because what it says in effect to all of us is, "You have no peace inside your skin. You are not happy, not whole." That is an unpardonable thing to say to a man whether it is true or false but especially if it is true because there he is, trying so hard to be happy, all of us are, to find some kind of inner peace and all in all maybe not making too bad a job of it considering the odds, so that what could be worse psychologically, humanly, than to say to him what amounts to "You will never make it. You have not and you will not, at least not without help."

● **Jesus, I do not like being told that I need help, but I know deep-down that I do. Have mercy on me in my arrogance, and save me.**

Thursday, The Fifth Week of Lent

Is My Prayer Free and Spontaneous?

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. Romans 8:26

The essence of prayer is something like the breaking of silence between strangers. It is the need to be known and the need to know. Prayer is the sound made by our deepest aloneness. I am thinking not just of formal prayers that a religious person might say in church or in bed at night, but of the kind of vestigial, broken fragments of prayer that people use without thinking of them as prayers: something terrible happens, and you might say, "God help us" or "Jesus Christ"—which amount to poor, crippled and hidden prayers . . . Prayer is our impluse to open up our life at its deepest level. People pray because they cannot help it.

● **Come Holy Spirit, open my mind and soften my heart so that the prayers locked deep inside me may be set free and flow like water.**

Friday, The Fifth Week of Lent

Do I Believe Prayer Really Works?

I believe, help my unbelief. Mark 9:24

When you pray, believe Somebody is listening. Believe in miracles. That's what Jesus told the father who asked him to heal his epileptic son. Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes." And the father spoke for all of us when he answered, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

What about when the boy is not healed? When, listened to or not listened to, the prayer goes unanswered? Who knows? Just keep praying, Jesus says. Remember the sleepy friend, the crooked judge. Even if the boy dies, keep on beating the path to God's door, because the one thing you can be sure of is that down the path you beat with even your most half-cocked and halting prayer the God you call upon will finally come, and even if he does not bring you the answer you want, he will bring you himself. And maybe at the secret heart of all our prayers that is what we are really praying for.

● **Jesus, when I pray let me know even a little of the power of your presence. In that way, all my prayers will be answered even if the specific things I ask for may not be granted.**

Saturday, The Fifth Week of Lent

Do I Mean The Lord's Prayer When I Say It?

When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name." Luke 11:2

We do well not to pray the Lord's Prayer lightly. It takes guts to pray. "Thy will be done" is what we are saying. That is the climax of the first half of the prayer. We are asking God to be God. We are asking God to do not what we want but what God wants. We are asking God to make manifest the holiness that is now mostly hidden, to set free in all its terrible splendor the devastating power that is now mostly under restraint. "Thy Kingdom come . . . on earth" is what we are saying. And if that were suddenly to happen, what then? . . .which if any of our most precious visions of what God is and of what human beings are would prove to be more or less on the mark and which would turn out to be as phony as three-dollar bills? To speak those words is to invite the tiger out of the cage, to unleash a power that makes atomic power look like a warm breeze.

In the second half, we pray: Give us. Forgive us. Don't test us. Deliver us. If it takes guts to face the omnipotence that is God's, it takes perhaps

no less to face the impotence that is ours. We can do nothing without God. We can have nothing with God. Without God we are nothing.

It is only the words "Our Father" that make the prayer bearable. If God is indeed something like a father, then as something like children maybe we can risk approaching him anyway.

● **O God, how often I have recited The Lord's Prayer with little or no conviction! This Lent—and always—grant me the grace to pray it with deep faith, firm hope and genuine love.**

Holy Week • Palm Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God, speak to us during these holy days that we may hear you. Then speak to us again and yet again so that, if in our hearts we answer you by saying "No," we may at least know well to whom we say it, and what it costs us to say it, and what it costs our brothers and sisters, and what it costs you. And when at those moments that we can never foretell we do indeed say "Yes" to you, forgive our halfheartedness, accept us as we are, work your miracle within us, and of your grace give us strength to follow wherever love may lead.

We bless you for him who shows us the way and is the way and who will be, we pray, at the end of all our ways. Remember us. Remember us. For your mercy's sake. Amen.

Monday of Holy Week

Do I Expect Love To Be Painless?

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:7

If by some magic you could eliminate the pain you are caused by the pain of someone you love, I for one cannot imagine working such magic because the pain is so much a part of the love that the love would be vastly diminished, unrecognizable, without it. To suffer in love for another's suffering is to live life not only at its fullest but at its holiest.

● **O Jesus, you who sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane at the thought of the path you were about to walk, help me to accept gracefully all the pain that true love brings into my life.**

Must I Suffer With Christ?

For God has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well. Philippians 1:29

To say that Christ takes upon himself the sins of the world is to say that he takes upon himself the suffering of the world too. It is to say that in a sense his suffering on the cross continues for as long as any of us suffers. Furthermore, in being called to take up our own crosses and follow him, we are called to particapte in his suffering. Christianity nevertheless affirms this love that suffers and, what is more, affirms it not in spite of the fact that it suffers but because of it. It affirms it for the reason that to love others to the point of suffering with them and for them in their own suffering is the only way ultimately to heal them, redeem them. It is God's way in Christ, and we are called to participate . . . we are called to be Christs to all humankind, in other words, and that is close to the heart of our faith and of our lives together as Christians.

● **Jesus, today I embrace my sufferings and unite them with your suffering, which redeemed me and the world.**

Do I Often Miss Chances of Doing Right?

I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Romans 7:18-19

For Pilate, it was not so much the terrible thing he did as the wonderful thing he proved incapable of doing. He could have stuck to his guns and resisted the pressure. He could have spared the man's life. He could have spared him at least the scourging and catcalls and the appalling way he died. He could have spoken some word of comfort when there was

nobody else in the world with either the chance or the courage to speak it. He could have shaken his hand. He could have said goodbye. He could have made some two-bit gesture which, even though it would have made no ultimate difference, to him would have made all the difference.

But he didn't do it, he didn't do it, and on that basis alone you can almost believe the sad old legend is true that again and again his body rises to the surface of a mountain lake and goes through the motion of washing its hands as he tries to cleanse himself not of something he did, for which God could forgive him, but of something he might have done but did not, for which he could never forgive himself.

● **Jesus, when I am tempted to act like Pilate and refuse to live up to the demands of even a minimal Christian commitment, grant me the courage to live my faith more fully.**

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Do I Live As If Christ Died For Me?

He broke the bread and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:24

Some call it *Holy Communion* because when feeding at this implausible table, Christians believe that they are communing with the Holy One himself, his spirit enlivening their spirits, heating the blood and gladdening the heart just the way wine, as spirits, can.

They are also, of course, communing with each other. To eat any meal together is to meet at the level of our most basic need. It is hard to preserve your dignity with butter on your chin or to keep your distance when asking for the tomato ketchup.

To eat this particular meal together is to meet at the level of our most basic humanness, which involves our need not just for food but for each other. I need you to help fill my emptiness just as you need me to help fill yours. As for the emptiness that's still left over, well we're in it together, or it is in us. Maybe it's most of what makes us human and makes us brothers and sisters.

The next time you walk down the street, take a good look at every face you pass and in your mind say *Christ died for thee.* That girl. That slob. That phony. That crook. That saint. That fool. Christ died for thee. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for *thee.*

● **O Jesus, on this day of receiving your body and blood in the Last Supper, help me to remember your sacrifice so that I may be more active in sacrificial love for others.**

Does Jesus' Death Matter To Me?

We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 1 Corinthians 1:23

Does the death of Jesus Christ twenty centuries ago make any difference to people like us who live in a world that he could not possibly have imagined, a world of people, many of whom believe God is dead? Is the Death of Christ a death that really matters any more except in the dim way that any noble death might be said to matter?

All I can say is that I would not be writing these words unless I believed that the answer is Yes, that his death does make all the difference, even for us. I believe that by his dying he released into the world an entirely new kind of life, his kind of life, that has flowed down through the tragic centuries like water through a dry land, making alive and whole all who will only kneel to drink. That is the only reason it is not blasphemy to speak of the Friday of his unspeakable death as Good Friday.

● **Help me, O Crucified One, to stand under your cross on this Good Friday, to accept the mystery of my redemption and to commit myself anew to your sacred Word and will in all things.**

SATURDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Am I Living For Myself or For My Savior?

Rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.
Romans 5:7-8

If another man dies so that I can live, it imposes a terrible burden on my life. From that point on, I cannot live any longer just for myself. I have got to live also somehow for him, as though in some sense he lives through me now as, in another sense, I live through him. If what he would have done with his life is going to be done, then I have got to do it. My debt to him is so great that the only way I can approach paying it is by living a life as brave and beautiful as his death. So maybe I would have prevented his dying if I could, but since it is too late for that, I can only live my life for what it truely is: not a life that is mine by natural right, to live any way I choose, but a life that is mine only because he gave it to me, and I have got to live it in a way that he also would have chosen.

● **Jesus, help me to live today and all my days in praise and thanksgiving for all you have done for me.**

EASTER SUNDAY

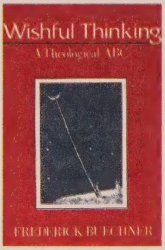
Do I Believe Joy Will Be Mine Forever?

You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.
Acts 3:15

We have heard so much tragic news during this fantastic century of ours that when the news is good we cannot hear it. But the proclamation of Easter Day is that all is well. And as a Christian, I say this not with the easy optimism of one who has never known a time when all was not well but as one who has faced the Cross in all its obscenity as well as in all its glory, who has known one way or another what it is like to live separated from God. In the end, his will, not ours, is done. Love is the victor. Death is not the end. The end is life. His life and our lives through him, in him. Existence has greater depths of beauty, mystery, and benediction than the wildest visionary has ever dared to dream. Christ our Lord has risen. Amen.

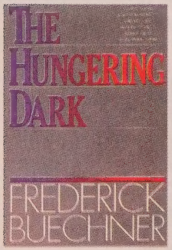
Alleluia!

A Contemporary Classic of Theological Wit & Wisdom



Few writers of our time have shown the talent of **Frederick Buechner** in turning time-worn theological phrases on their heads—and eliciting new insights in the process. As timely now as when first published in 1973, ***Wishful Thinking*** examines about 150 religious words (from *A* to *Z*) with a refreshing clarity and simplicity, yet with a deep respect for the original meaning.

✓ Hardcover • 100 pgs. • $14.95 ($17.25 in Canada) + $2 shipping & handling fee • Order Code WI-D



The Hungering Dark is a book of 13 sermons that reveal Buechner's sensitivity to religious pangs of the human heart. Drawing on a variety of themes from both the Old and New Testaments, Buechner's reflections are deeply personal and introspective, yet seem to touch a religious nerve common to all Christians. *This is preaching at its best—from the soul!*

✓ Paper • 125 pgs. • $8.95 ($10.50 in Canada) + $2 shipping & handling fee • Code TH-D

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Quantity	Code	Book Title	Price

Missouri Residents: Add 5.725% sales tax

Send to:

Creative Communications for the Parish
Book Order Department
10300 Watson Road
St. Louis, MO 63127

Shipping _____

Total Enclosed _____

An Easter Prayer

O You Who Comes,

who are the hope of the world, give us hope. Give us hope that beyond the worst the world can do there is such a best that not even the world can take it from us, hope that none whom you have loved is ever finally lost, not even to death.

O You Who Died

in loneliness and pain, suffer to die in us all that keeps us from you and from each other and from becoming as good and as brave as we are called to become. O Lamb of God, forgive us.

O You Who Rose Again,

You Holy Spirit of Christ, arise and live within us now, that we may be your body, that we may be your feet to walk into the world's pain, your hands to heal, your heart to break, if need must be, for love of the world.

O Risen Christ, make Christs of us all. Amen.

Alleluia!

From Death to Life was selected from the writings of **Frederick Buechner** by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers Inc. Cover photo by **Jerry Koser.** Other photos by **James E. Adams**. Drawing on cover: **Virginia Broderick.** Other drawings by **Kathye Arrington** and **Kristy Beckmann.** © 1991 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127 • 314-821-1363. Printed in the USA.

FB-1

OFFERING

The celebration of

HOLY COMMUNION

may begin with this stanza:

With your angels we adore you,
Holy, holy, holy Lord.
Earth and heaven bow before you,
God of hosts, by all adored.
Blest is he whose kindness gave us
His own blood and body true.
To the one who comes to save us:
Our hosannas glad are due!

CONSECRATION AND LORD'S PRAYER

Lamb of God, our mighty Savior,
All our sins you take away.
Lamb of God, by your great favor,
Lord, have mercy now, we pray.
Lamb of God, our prayers attending,
Never let your mercies cease,
But, your Holy Spirit sending,
Grant us all your gift of peace.

When the

DISTRIBUTION

is ended:

Chief of sinners though I be,
Jesus shed his blood for me,
Died that I might live on high,
Lives that I might never die.
As the branch is to the vine,
I am his, and he is mine.

A POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Peace, to soothe our bitter woes,
God in Christ on us bestows;
Jesus bought our peace with God
With his holy, precious blood;
Peace in him for sinners found
Is the Gospel's joyful sound.

The Lenten series By My Hand?—For My Sake! was written by Rolland Nothwehr and Peter J. Mead, edited with orders of service by Arden W. Mead, with psalm paraphrases by Elizabeth-Anne Vanek and original cover art by Sally Beck. © Copyright 1996 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. Phone: 1-800-325-9414. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.
BH-B

BY MY HAND? FOR MY SAKE!

BY MY HAND? FOR MY SAKE!

MAUNDY THURSDAY

WE GATHER AT THE CROSS ..... AS SINNERS FORGIVEN

(Confession of Sins from Psalm 51)

Alas! And did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For sinners such as I?

Ⓟ You are kind, God! Please have pity on me.
Ⓒ **You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins. Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.**
Ⓟ I know about my sins, and I cannot forget my terrible guilt.
Ⓒ **You are really the one I have sinned against. I have disobeyed you and have done great wrong. So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me. I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.**
Ⓟ But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom.
Ⓒ **Wash me with hyssop until I am clean and whiter than snow. Let me be happy and joyful!**
Ⓟ You crushed my bones,
Ⓒ **now let them celebrate. Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt.**
Ⓟ Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again. Don't chase me away from you or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Was it for sins that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!

Ⓟ In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you; for his sake your sins are forgiven. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit, that they may be called the children of God.
Ⓒ **Thanks be to God!**
Ⓟ Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Hope of ev'ry contrite soul,
O Joy of all the meek,
How kind you are to those who fall,
How good to those who seek!

HOMILY

HYMN

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON ..... EXODUS 24:3-11

RESPONSIVE PSALM ..... FROM PSALM 116

Ⓛ *I love you, God. You heard my cries.*
Ⓒ **You bent down to me when I called.**
Ⓛ *How can I repay you for all you have done for me?*
Ⓒ **I will raise the cup of salvation in your name. I will fulfill my promises before your people.**
Ⓛ *God, you are moved by the deaths of those who love you.*
Ⓒ **Remember me, your servant.**
Ⓛ *You cut death's cords, setting me free.*
Ⓒ **I will offer thanks, my God. I will call on your name. I will repay my vows before your people, within your house, O God.**

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON ..... HEBREWS 10:19-25

BY MY HAND? FOR MY SAKE!

HYMN ..... "OUR SAVIOR SPEAKS IN GRACE"

Our Savior speaks in grace, with words of mercy true:
"Forgive them, Father," thus he prays; "They know not what they do."

As one of us he dies. Sin's pow'r has done its worst.
Now to fulfill God's Word he cries a simple word, "I thirst."

Beneath the cross may I, for whom all this was done,
Repentant and believing cry, "This truly is God's Son!"

THE PRAYERS

1996 LENTEN CALENDAR

Daily Scripture and Reflection for the Sacred Season

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			21 *February* **Ash Wednesday** A heart that is open to God is a heart that is open to change. Open your heart this Lent. *Joel 2:12-18*	**22 Faith** As the Church continues to be built up, faith is still our only sure foundation. Everything else is only sinking sand. *Matthew 16:13-19*	**23 Clean** Christ wipes away even the evidence of our sin, making us innocent in the eyes of God the Father. *Psalm 51:3-6, 18-19*	**24 Lesson Plans** In prayer, in worship, in daily devotion, the lessons of the Lord are revealed. *Psalm 86:1-6*
25 New Life One sin led Adam and Eve to death. Now one Savior will lead us all to life. He alone clears a path for us. *Romans 5:12-19*	**26 See The Son** We have not yet seen God, but we can see the image of God's Son in the faces of those in need. *Matthew 25:31-46*	**27 Help From God** Even if others turn a deaf ear to our pleas, our cries for help will still be heard by God. *Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19*	**28 A Sign** The prophets of old pointed to signs that salvation was *on the way*. Jesus is the sign that salvation is *here*. *Luke 11:29-32*	**29 Provide** Even when we do not know exactly what we need, all our needs are known to God. He will provide. *Matthew 7:7-12*	**1** *March* **Carry On** Unload your sins before God so you can carry his blessings with you. *Psalm 130:1-8*	**2 Prayer** Hatred and anger can be overcome with the power of prayer and the strength of God's love. *Matthew 5:43-48*
3 Glory Jesus is brighter than the shiniest star in the sky. When we look upon him, we begin to share in his glory. *2 Timothy 1:8-10*	**4 Soldiers** The battle lines have been drawn, and God is calling us to join in the rebellion against sin. *Daniel 9:4-10*	**5 Humble** Perhaps a healthy helping of humble pie is the best preparation for life in the kingdom's banquet hall. *Matthew 23:1-12*	**6 In God's Hands** Nothing can destroy us when God reaches out to us and holds us tightly in his hands. *Psalm 31:5-6*	**7 Growth** Planted in Christ, our spirits will be strong, healthy, and prosperous. May this growth continue in us. *Jeremiah 17:5-10*	**8 In The Vineyard** Once rejected, Christ draws near to claim us as his own, decisively. *Matthew 21:33-43*	**9 Ready To Run** Are you ready to welcome home loved ones who have taken advantage of your generosity? God is. *Luke 15:11-32*
10 Great Power God often chooses our weakest moments to reveal his greatest powers. *Exodus 17:3-7*	**11 Grace** The waters of God's grace that were first poured upon us at baptism still provide us with renewal and healing. *2 Kings 5:1-15*	**12 Forgive** Forgiveness is something we receive and then release to the world. It is first a gift and then a calling. *Matthew 18:21-35*	**13 Pass It On** May we pass on to others the good news that has been passed on to us: Our God reigns! *Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9*	**14 Listen** The voice of God causes light to shine and evil to be cast out. Listen to God's voice and rejoice. *Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9*	**15 Love Is The Way** All of God's commandments can be summarized in one word, love. *Mark 12:28-34*	**16 A Gift Of Mercy** As forgiven children of God, we who once stood far off now stand at the altar of God's mercy. *Luke 18:9-14*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
17 *March* **Light** As each new day dawns, may the light of God's Son shine on us and in us—and through us. *Ephesians 5:8-14*	**18 Joy** A striking reversal is afoot: sorrow will turn to joy and crying will become laughter, all because of God. *Psalms 30:2, 4-6, 11-13*	**19 Faith And Hope** Faith looks back. Hope looks forward. Both look to God. *Romans 4:16-18*	**20 The Way** It's survival of the fittest when humans lead the way. But no one is left behind when Christ is in charge. *Isaiah 49:8-15*	**21 Precious** We are often attracted to the most beautiful things of this world. But even the finest gold cannot replace our Savior. *Psalm 106:19-23*	**22 Origins** There's no mistaking where Jesus came from. Tracing his origins always leads us back to God. *John 7:25-30*	**23 Speak** Christ's words caused commotion in the temple. But they sank deep into the hearts of those who believed. *John 7:40-53*
24 Alive The Spirit of Christ has become our lifeblood, the very force that makes us move and breathe and have our being. *Romans 8:8-11*	**25 Follow** The tasks God gives us may appear insurmountable, but for those who follow God's will, nothing is impossible. *Psalm 40:7-11*	**26 Comfort** The wiles of Satan throw the world into confusion. But in the midst of chaos, the cross of comfort is lifted up. *Numbers 21:4-9*	**27 Walk With God** Our faith takes us down roads we would never have chosen. But we can make it with God at our side. *Daniel 3:14-20*	**28 Claimed** History shows us how death keeps claiming those we love. But Christ shows us how he can claim us from death. *John 8:51-59*	**29 Safe** Don't drown yourself in fear, the psalmist says. When waves of danger hit, seek safety in the Lord. *Psalm 18:2-7*	**30 One For All** Jesus lifted the heavy burden of sin that weighed us down and placed it on his shoulders. *John 11:45-57*
31 Released Our release from sin could be achieved only when God released his Son into the world. Thanks be to God! *Philippians 2:6-11*	**1** *April* **Homage** Paying homage to Christ often means following what our heart tells us, not what others tell us to do. *John 12:1-11*	**2 Draw Near** We find answers to our questions only when we draw near to Jesus and wait for his response. *John 13:21-33*	**3 Zeal** The evils of the world may seem to mount against us, but our zeal for the Lord can carry us through. *Psalm 69:8-10*			

The Paschal Triduum

Maundy Thursday

The sharing of Christ's body and blood as well as the acts of love and service that occurred on this night are not trapped in ancient history. They define us as followers of Christ right here and right now.

1 Cor. 11:23-26

Good Friday

The sky turned black. The ground shook. The earth itself could sense the magnitude of our Lord's death. May we too marvel at the powerful feat accomplished on the cross.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Easter Vigil

The surprise of Easter is not that Christ's tomb was empty. It's that his grave did indeed contain something, and that something was a promise fulfilled: Life has broken through death!

Romans 6:3-11

Traditional Lenten Disciplines

Worship & Meditation: During Lent, many congregations offer added opportunities for public worship and encourage their members to more frequent and fervent prayer, Bible study and private meditation on the saving love of God in Jesus Christ.

Fasting & Abstinence: As an aid to devotional life, many Christians give up certain foods or activities through Lent. Some also set aside certain days (Wednesdays or Fridays) for more rigorous fasting in the Lord's honor.

Almsgiving: Moved by the sacrifice of Christ, many Christians combine almsgiving with fasting, giving to the poor the money they saved by eating, drinking, or buying less as they rely more upon God's abundant grace.

1996 Lenten Calendar was compiled by Mark Zimmermann and Arden Mead for **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. (800)325-9414. ©1996. Photo by Roger M. Smith/Vision Impact Photography. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

Creative
CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PARISH, INC.
10300 Watson Road
St. Louis, MO 63127

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No.
2891
St. Louis, MO

LENT ▪ HOLY WEEK ▪ EASTER
DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS ▪ WORSHIP SERVICES ▪ BULLETINS
CHILDREN'S & TEACHERS' RESOURCES ▪ PARISH CARDS ▪ VIDEOS

Plus Many More New Ideas for
Worship & Ministry in Your Parish

TO THE PASTOR:

CONVENANT METROPOLITAN COM CHURC
REV MARGE RAGONA
PO BOX 101473
BIRMINGHAM AL 35210

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS
FOR THE PARISH

NEW RESOURCES
LENT ▪ HOLY WEEK ▪ EASTER
1996

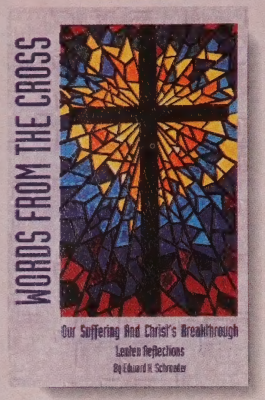
CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PARISH
10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL RESOURCES

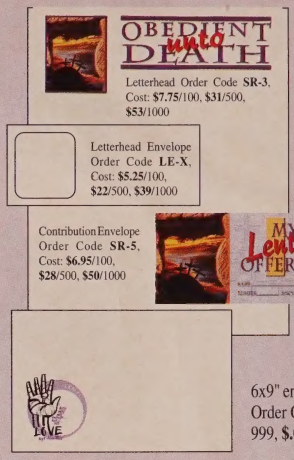
WORDS FROM THE CROSS

OUR SUFFERING AND CHRIST'S BREAKTHROUGH
LENTEN REFLECTIONS BY THE REV. DR. EDWARD H. SCHROEDER

NEW THIS YEAR!



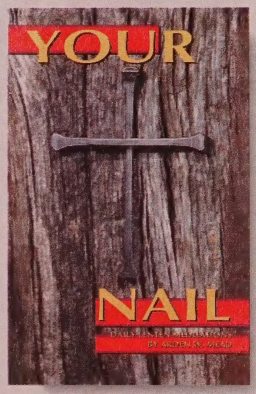
Traditionally, the last words and actions of Christ from the cross have provided a rich resource for Lenten reflection and prayer because they contain within them the whole Gospel. From the cross we see unfolding the Gospel drama of the unbounded mercy, forgiveness, love, and redemption that God offers to our broken world. Professor Edward Schroeder reflects on these power-packed words and symbols flowing from Christ's cross. Each of these 46 (Lenten weekdays plus six Sundays) daily devotions features sharply-focused theological insights written in a highly captivating personal style. This is full-bodied Lenten fare with plenty of nourishment for readers! Order Code **SR-1** Cost **$.59**/1-199, **$.56**/200-499, **$.52**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+



A colorful Table Tent Calendar is available as a visual reminder of the daily Lenten discipline one has undertaken. Order Code **SR-2**, Cost: **$.19**/1-499, **$.17**/500-999, **$.15**/1000+

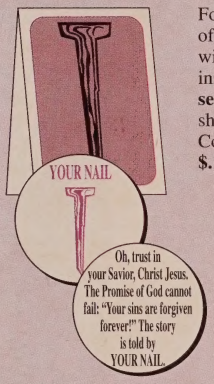
6x9" envelope for use with church mailings etc. Order Code **SR-4**, Cost: **$.10**/1-499, **$.09**/500-999, **$.08**/1000+

YOUR NAIL



More than 1,500,000 copies of this devotional classic have been distributed and used since it was first issued 18 years ago!

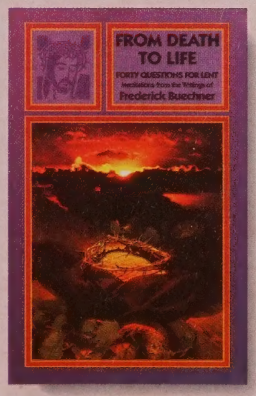
Beginning with Ash Wednesday and running through Easter Sunday, the daily devotions in this booklet invite readers to meditate on the meaning of Christ's suffering and death for their own lives. They are encouraged to use *a real nail* as a reminder and help for their meditation. Colossians 2:14-15, which includes the thought that *"God took all the charges that were against us and nailed them to the Cross,"* is the basic text from which all the devotions are derived. Order Code **YN-1** Cost: **$.59**/1-199, **$.56**/200-499, **$.52**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+



For those who wish, a unique **table tent** is also offered by Creative Communications, die-cut with slots into which a *real nail* may be inserted. (**We do not provide the nails themselves.** We suggest something like a horseshoe nail as looking most "authentic.") Order Code, **YN-2** Cost: **$.17**/1-499, **$.16**/500-999, **$.15**/1000+

A Wooden Medallion, bearing the image of your nail, is also available from Creative Communications. Carried either in your pocket or purse, the medallion can serve as a daily reminder of the focus of your Lenten meditations—your nail. Order Code, **YN-6** Cost: **$.19**/1-99, **$.18**/100-499, **$.16**/500-999, **$.15**/1000-1999, **$.13**/2000+

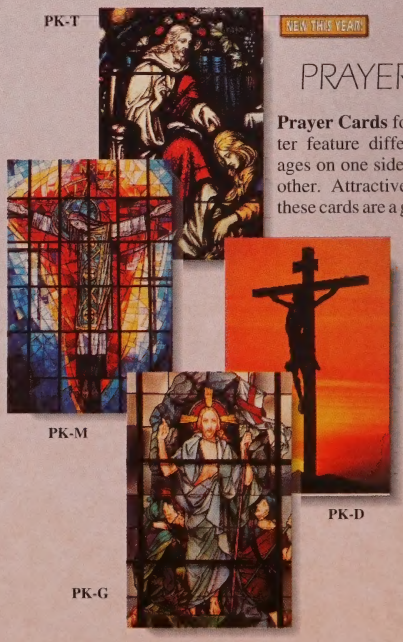
FROM DEATH TO LIFE



Few writers can match Frederick Buechner's ability to articulate the Christian faith in a way that people of our time take to heart so readily. Now Buechner's best religious insights have been gathered into this Lenten devotional booklet entitled **From Death to Life: Forty Questions for Lent.** Creative Communications for the Parish has selected 40 brief readings from Buechner's many books. The selections make for compelling Lenten reflections on such themes as *Am I Really Trying to Love God? Do I Really Love Anyone Besides Myself? Do I Act As If I'll Never Die? Am I Willing to Repent?* Each daily devotion is accompanied by an appropriate Scripture text and a brief concluding prayer. Order Code **FB-1** Cost: **$.59**/1-199, **$.56**/200-499, **$.52**/500-999, $.49/1000+

PK-T

NEW THIS YEAR!



PK-M

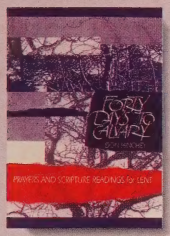
PK-D

PK-G

PRAYER CARDS

Prayer Cards for Lent and for Easter feature different full-color images on one side and prayers on the other. Attractive and inexpensive, these cards are a good way to encourage Lenten observation and Easter celebration in your parish. Order Code *(Foot Washing)* **PK-T;** *(Stained Glass Cross-Lent)* **PK-M;** *(Sunset Cross-Lent)* **PK-D;** *(Resurrection-Easter)* **PK-G.** Cost **$4.50**/50, **$7**/100, **$26**/500, **$40**/1000, **$70**/2000

LENTEN PRAYER BOOKS



NEW THIS YEAR!

FORTY DAYS TO CALVARY
PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR LENT

Lent calls all Christians to walk, again, with Christ on the road to Calvary, there to watch God's Son open the way of salvation for all of us. This booklet of daily prayers takes us along that road, using the familiar words of Matthew's Gospel as a guide. With the 40 days divided into 7 sections—Days of Preparation, Discipleship, Waiting, Violence, Trial, Condemnation, and Death & Life—author Donald Hinchey opens to us the meaning of the final days of Christ. Through the use of personal prayers for people today, he opens us to the presence of Christ and the meaning of discipleship. Each daily prayer is accompanied by a question for thought or meditation. Code: **LG-7**. Cost: **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

WITH ALL MY HEART

Enriching one's personal prayer is a traditional goal of Lent—and this book is sure to help readers achieve that goal. For each day of Lent, the book has a clearly worded, down-to-earth reflection on a Christian practice, teaching or truth drawn from a Scripture quote. Each reflection sets the stage for a personal prayer that features a gentle invitation to readers to adopt specific attitudes, bodily postures or symbols to enhance their prayer. Order Code **LG-6.** Cost: **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

SPECIAL LENTEN RESOURCES

NEW THIS YEAR!

LENTEN BULLETIN INSERT

Your worshippers will deepen their experience of Lent with this year's Lenten bulletin insert. Brief, clear paragraphs review the meaning and history of the season, its symbols, terms, and the great themes of the season's prescribed Scripture lessons (fit all lectionary series). A list of daily Bible readings for Ash Wednesday through Easter takes users through Luke's Gospel plus selected prophecies and psalms. Order Code **LS-B.** Cost: 50/**$5**, 100/**$7**, 200/**$12**

FOCUS ON THE CHURCH YEAR

If the Christian Church Year is a mystery to some of your members, they will find answers in Creative's colorful new bulletin insert, **Focus on the Church Year**. Brief and easy-to-understand, one side of this insert explains what the Church Year is and why Christians observe it—*"to learn the words and acts of God…to remember the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord…to relive these saving events…."* The other side pictures a full Church Year sequence of seasons (*Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost)* and their festival days, along with Christian seasonal symbols in color. Order Code **CY-I.** Cost: 50/**$5**, 100/**$7**, 200/**$12**

Special savings! Order the same quantity of *both inserts* and save **up to 25%!** Order Code **LS-F** Cost: 50 of each insert, **$8**; 100/**$11**; 250/**$18.**

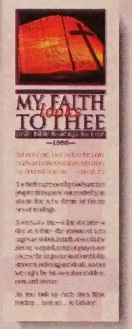
NEW THIS YEAR!

NEW THIS YEAR!

1996 LENTEN CALENDAR builds upon the traditional Lenten practices of worship and meditation. With Scriptural readings and spiritual accents for each day, this is a great reminder of the meaning of Lent. Printed in full color on both sides of an 8.5" x 11" vellum sheet, **this calendar has space for parishes to imprint their schedules for Lent and Holy Week services.** For use in home or office, ideal for bulletin board or refrigerator door. Order Code **DC-9,** Cost: **$10.90**/100, **$42**/500, **$78**/1000.

TURN NOT FROM HIS GRIEFS AWAY
A SCRIPTURAL JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

Lent is a time of preparation and how better prepare than to relive the Savior's ministry through Scripture readings for each day of Lent? **Turn Not From His Griefs Away** provides a convenient way to review our Lord's career, focusing mainly on the Gospels, and adding commentary by the great prophet of the Savior, Isaiah. Brief comments orient the reader to each day's selection; thought-provoking questions and a prayer conclude the day's meditation. Pocket-size with full color cover. Order Code **MW-Z**, Cost: 5-49/**$.48** each, 50-99/**$.47**, 100-499/**$.46,** 500-999/**$.40**, 1000+/**$.38**



NEW THIS YEAR!

MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE
Daily Bible Readings for the 1996 Lenten Season

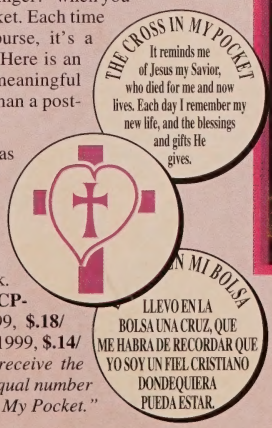
Lent urges God's people to look in faith at our divine Savior, to speak to him in prayer and receive the forgiveness offered in his innocent suffering and death, so that we might be his own dear children, now and forever. Each week the daily readings in this bookmark explore the thoughts expressed in another line of the beloved hymn *My Faith Looks Up to Thee*. Code **BF-8**, Cost: 1-499/**$.12**, 500-999/**$.11**, 1000+/**$.10**

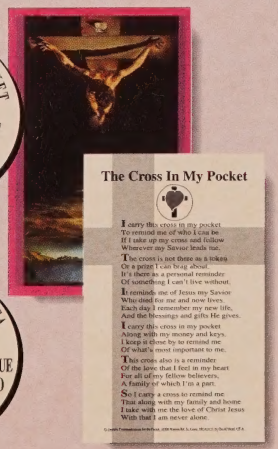
THE CROSS IN MY POCKET

Available in English & Spanish

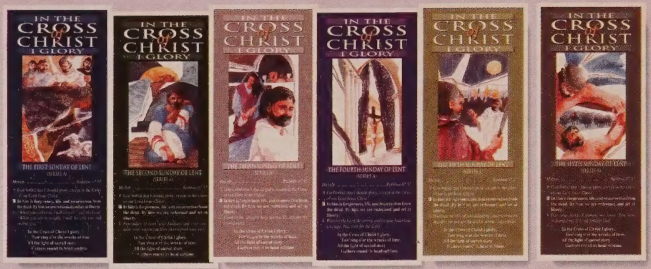
It's like tying a string around your finger! - when you carry this unique cross in your pocket. Each time you reach into your pocket or purse, it's a reminder of the meaning of Lent. Here is an idea that works to make Lent more meaningful for your people...and it costs less than a postage stamp.

• A daily reminder of Lent • Perfect as an enclosure in Lenten mailings • Can be passed out Ash Wednesday or 1st Sunday in Lent • Ideal to coordinate with sermon and bulletin; print a verse of the poem in the bulletin or parish newsletter each week. Order Code **CP-1** English Version, **CP-2** Spanish Version. Cost: **$.19**/1-99, **$.18**/100-499, **$.17**/500-999, **$.16**/1000-1999, **$.14**/2000+ *Note: For this cost you receive the special wooden medallion and an equal number of the cards entitled, "The Cross in My Pocket."*





Also available, finely crafted **metal** crosses, beautiful silver or bronze colors with the inscription, "God Loves You" embossed on the cross. With each cross you receive a copy of the poem, "I Carry This Cross in My Pocket." Cost: **$.25**/1-99, **$.23**/100-499, **$.21**/500-999, **$.19**/1000-1999, **$.16**/2000+. Order Code **CP-S** (Silver Cross), **CP-G** (Bronze Cross).



NEW THIS YEAR! LENTEN LITANIES

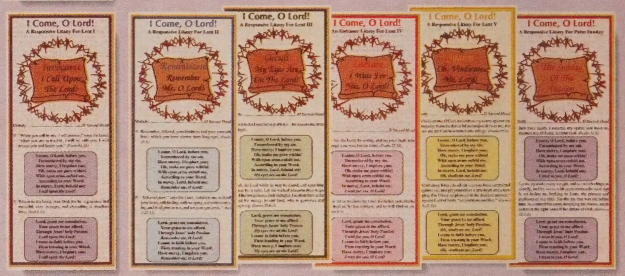
"IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST I GLORY" is a series of six litanies incorporating all four stanzas of that beloved hymn and Galatians 6:14 on which it is based, interspersed with responsive readings from the Prophets (calling to repentance), the Psalms (assuring God's grace), and the New Testament (focusing directly on the Cross), as well as repeated use of the traditional Lenten Introit Antiphons (which may be spoken from the balcony for greater variety and impact).

Order Code **TC-A** for the series of six litanies. Cost: **$.24**/1-499 sets. **$.20**/ 500-999 sets. **$.16**/1000+ sets.

"I COME, O LORD" is a free translation of the Latin word *Introit* (literally, "he enters"). Each of the six weekly litanies in this series derives its theme from the historic Latin names for the successive six Sundays in Lent.

As such, they may be used as the entire opening liturgy for the Sundays in Lent, followed by the appropriate Scripture readings. The choral responses are sung to the well known melody of the hymn *O Sacred Head Now Wounded.* Music is provided with each order.

A benediction sung responsively to *O Sacred Head* is also included and reprises once more the day's theme phrase. Order Code **TC-4** for the series of six litanies. Cost: **$.24**/1-499 sets. **$.20**/500-999 sets. **$.16**/1000+ sets.



LENTEN COIN FOLDER AND COIN BOXES

Many parishes find Lent the ideal time to ask for a special gift. Illustrated beautifully for Lent, this coin holder invites Christians to set aside a quarter a day and thus $10 during the forty days of Lent. A special slot makes possible an additional check or currency offering. The back cover has space for the contributor's name and offering envelope number. Folds to 4"x 6 1/8" to fit in a standard envelope. Order Code **LC-F**, Cost: **$.34**/1-99, **$.32**/100-499, **$.30**/500+ Envelope for coin holder, Order Code **EN-V**, cost: **$4**/50, **$6**/100, **$20**/500

This Lent Offering Box is an ideal way to remind the members of your parish that Lent is a time for sacrificial giving. Illustrated with the theme,"Christ Died for All," the box folds so that it is easily mailable in a #10 envelope (**Order Code LT-C**). An Offering Box for year around use is also available (Order Code **CB-U**). The boxes measure 2 1/2" x 1 5/8" x 3 3/4". Cost: **$.33**/ 1-99, **$.31**/100-499, **$.29**/500+

LENTEN PRAYER BOOKS

NEW THIS YEAR!

LENT AT HOME, by popular writers Kathy and Mitch Finley, offers practical ideas for celebrating Lent as a family. Through prayers and simple activities, families can build on the experience of Lent that children encounter at church and in school. Activity suggestions include planting seeds in paper cups to demonstrate growth during Lent, creating a Lenten "map" to follow the progress of the season, and praying with Jesus' "steps to calvary" as a family. Order Code **LF-1** Cost **$.29**/1-499, **$.25**/500-999, **$.23**/1000+

NEW THIS YEAR! *For young people!*

SAFE PASSAGE A Lenten Journal for Teenagers Devotional booklets for the teenager in your congregation are scarce. Here, in *Safe Passage* you will find devotions, prayers, activities, stories and Bible studies that are sure to connect! Teenagers are led, through engaging, glib stories and devotions, to express their growing faith through writing, drawing, imagining and praying. This small (16 page) yet powerful Lenten journal is printed in full color throughout. And it's not just fluff. The devotions examine the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, beginning with our need for salvation and ending with Christ's resurrection. Great for confirmation classes, as well as those teens away at school! Order Code: **CN-3**. Cost **$.29**/1-499, **$.25**/500-999, **$.23**/1000+

LENTEN BIBLE STUDIES

Holy Masquerade
A Six-Part Study for Lent

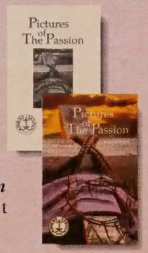
Holy Masquerade, a novel by author Olav Hartman is the basis for a study of important Lenten themes: faith and doubt. Each week participants read a portion of the 140 page book. When participants gather, their reading is placed into the context of selections from Scripture. Student study guides lead them through a discussion about the meaning of faith, especially in the life of the church.

Holy Masquerade unfolds during the weeks of Lent and the book's chapters bear the old Latin names the church assigned for those weeks. Armed with her pagan honesty, Mrs. Svenson, the minister's wife, sets out to test the quality and depth of her husband's faith and that of his flock. In the process she—and the reader—become aware of her deep craving for faith.

Cost: Copies of the 140 page paperback book, ***Holy Masquerade*** (books can be shared) 1-10 @**$2.95**, 10+ **$2.50**. Order Code **HM-5**, Leader's Guide **$2.95**, @Order Code **HM-8**, Student Guide @**$1.95**, Order Code **HM-9**

Pictures of the Passion
A Six-Week Lenten Bible Study

How many times have the members of your congregation heard the Passion story? Each Lent they reflect on the awesome events surrounding Christ's death and resurrection. *Pictures of the Passion* follows Series A (ILCW) and features the Gospel of Matthew. Participants hear the readings in church, reflect on them, and then gain greater insight as they share them in a weekly group study.



***Pictures of the Passion* Student Guide** Cost **$2.75**, Order Code **PA-1**;

***Pictures of the Passion* Leader's Guide**, Cost **$2.75**, Order Code **PA-2**

For Your Lenten Bible Study

Church Year Bible Studies:
Lent-Easter Ascension-Pentecost

The *Church Year Bible Study* books are for those who wish to examine in-depth the Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel lessons appointed in Series A for each Sunday, plus festival days. Every session will help lay people understand the lectionary, become familiar with its readings, discover a common theme from each Sunday's lessons and apply it to their lives. Includes 17 sessions (lessons for Sundays, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Ascension). Available leader's guides offer how-to and background information for each step of every session. **Study Guide** Order Code **A2-S** Cost: **$5.00; Leader's Guide Order** Code **A2-L** Cost: **$5.00**

Series Order Code EC-H

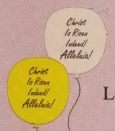
EASTER CROSSES

An Empty Cross... the fitting touch to Easter celebration. Mailed or brought home from your Easter services these new **Easter Crosses** are a reminder of Christ's victory over death. They work well attached to the refrigerator door, bulletin board...or used as a bookmark. Sold only in groups of 50, with approximately equal numbers of the four crosses. Order Code **EC-A, EC-G**, or **EC-H** Cost: **$6**/50, **$10**/100, **$40**/500, **$70**/1000

Series Order Code EC-G

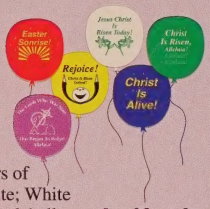
Series Order Code EC-A

EASTER BALLOONS



Your people (young and old alike) will love to take these Easter balloons home to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ during the days following Easter.

- **Great for a sunrise service!**
- **Great to decorate the church & school!**
- **Great to take home!**



Easter Balloons may be ordered in four ways: Mixed colors of Red, Blue, Green, Lavender, White and Yellow; Mixed Yellow and White; White only; or Yellow only. Average flying time with helium is **8 hours**. In general, balloons **should not be filled** with helium the night before Easter services. Order Code **EB-5** (mixed colors), Order Code **EB-8** (mixed yellow & white), Order Code **EB-6** (yellow only), Order Code **EB-7** (white only). Balloons are sold only in 50's, Cost: **$8**/50, **$15**/100, **$65**/500, **$110**/1000

PENTECOST BALLOONS

Pentecost balloons provide a memorable illustration and take home gift. In mixed lots, these red and white balloons are emblazoned with the Biblical gifts of the Spirit. Helium certified, they have a flying time after being filled with helium of approximately **8 hours.** Order Code **PB-1.** Cost: **$8**/50, **$15**/100, **$65**/500, **$110**/1000

EASTER LITANIES

RISEN INDEED! is a series of seven responsive litanies for the Easter Season. Beginning with Easter Sunday and continuing through the Sunday before Pentecost, they denote the ongoing joy and triumph of Eastertide and unite the entire Season with a common format and the repeated use of the familiar melody *I Know That My Redeemer Lives*.

If used following the Opening Hymn (of your own choosing), these litanies may well replace the Invocation and Kyrie in Sunday services for the entire Season. As such, they could well be followed immediately by a Hymn of Praise (such as *This Is the Feast of Victory for Our God*) and the Prayer of the Day. Since each litany uses material from all three cycles of the Lectionary to begin setting a theme for the day, they may be used in any year; their message is universal.

Order Code **RD-1**, Cost: (full set of seven) **$.24**/1-499, **$.19**/500+

PALM CROSSES FOR PALM SUNDAY

Great for handouts on Palm Sunday!

Must be bought in groups of 50.

African Palm Crosses for Palm Sunday are hand made throughout the year by families in seven mud hut villages in Tanzania, East Africa, to supplement meager incomes. Sales help support community projects such as agricultural and vocational training, schools, community water systems and emergency relief.

These handsome crosses are crafted from dry palm fronds and measure 7.5 to 8.5 inches tall. Perfect for children and adults, the palm crosses are formed with a loop at the top, allowing them to be hung or worn on a cord, as desired. Order Code **PS-9**; Cost: **$8.50**/50, **$15**/100, **$70**/500.

1996 LITURGICAL WALL CALENDAR

NEW LOW PRICE! This new **Liturgical Wall Calendar** highlights the seasons and festivals of the church year in colorful symbolic form. It's large 11" x 17" size makes it easy to read, and suitable for hanging on a wall, door, or refrigerator. Each Sunday of the year bears a special symbol depicting the season or festival celebrated that day—a green cross for the Sundays after Pentecost, a purple arrow for Advent, a red dove for Pentecost, a rising sun for Easter, and a purple cross for Lent. Sharing this inexpensive gift shares the liturgical church year with members of your congregation. Order Code **LC-1**, Cost: **$.25** each.

PRIVATE PRAYERS FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

PRIVATE PRAYERS for Public Worship are printed on narrow cards that may be **placed in pew racks** or used as **hymnal bookmarks**, to encourage and enhance personal preparation and participation in the worship of the church.

Each card contains six prayers for private meditation: • Upon Entering • At the Sermon • At the Offering • Before Communion • After Communion • Before Departing — and the note: "Please leave this card for use at future services."

There are four different cards in this series (therefore four different sets of prayers), each with its own seasonal emphasis and distinctive color and design: *Advent/Christmas* (Order Code **PW-1**) • *Lent* (Order Code **PW-2**) • *Eastertide* (Order Code **PW-3**) • and "*Growing in the Lord*" for non-festival "green seasons" of the Church Year (Order Code **PW-4**).

Cost for each card: **$.11**/25-499, **$.09**/500-999, **$.08**/1000+. Minimum order 25 cards. Order **sets of all four cards**, Order Code **PW-5**, Cost: **$.33**/25-499 sets, **$.30**/500-999 sets. Minimum order of the sets is 25.

NEW LIFE WORSHIP CARDS

NEW THIS YEAR!

A perennial favorite now newly revised, the **Alleluia!** Communion Worship Card uses "The Church's One Foundation" and three popular Easter melodies. Order Code **W-15**

NEW THIS YEAR!

Entirely new, the **Living Lord** Communion Worship Card uses the melodies from "Oh Worship the King" and "For All The Saints." Perfect for the Easter Season or any other joyful celebration. Order Code **W-13**

Each **New Life Worship Card** by Creative Communications offers a different approach to one portion of your church service. Pass them out on selected Sundays or at special services. **The cards are reusable.**

• Variety for worship services • New congregational responses • Make Lent/Easter services special

Lent—"Behold the Lamb!" Lenten hymns shape this setting for Communion. Catch Lent's Spirit. Code **WC-8**

Easter-Pentecost—"Joyful, Joyful!" For Holy Communion this card employs cheerful melodies. Code **W-12**

All Year—"Father Forgive" For Lent or all year. A responsive confession using the commandments. Code **WC-3**

All Year—The Hope Card An easy to follow Worship Card for funerals that is ideal for small services. Code **W-10**

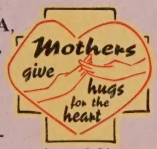
Worship Card Prices: 1-499 @ **$.15,** 500-999 @ **$.14**, 1000+ @ **$.11. Order any three worship cards at reduced prices:** 1-499 sets of three @ **$.33** per set, 500-999 sets of three @ **$.30** per set, 1000+ sets of three @ **$.22** per set. Music and instructions for the pastor are provided as needed with each order.

MOTHER'S DAY HANDOUT

Here's the ideal handout for Mother's Day. Inexpensive-and it will be appreciated, either the parish or the children can present these colorful lapel pins (1" square) and bookmarks (2.5" x 7") to their mothers as part of your Sunday morning activities. Included with each order are two support pieces to help you incorporate this unique handout into the service. You'll receive a Mother's Day children's message and a reproducible litany showing how Christian mothers can be an example of God's love.

Order Code **MF-A**, Cost: **$.69**/1-99, **$.62**/100-499, **$.59**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+.

Limited supply—order early!

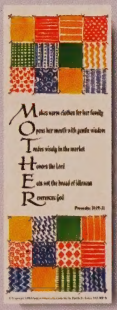


Actual Size

MOTHER'S & FATHER'S DAY BOOKMARK HANDOUTS

Father's Day (MF-Y)

Father's Day (MF-V)

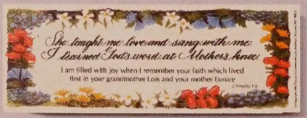


Mother's Day (MF-S)

Mother's Day (MF-X)

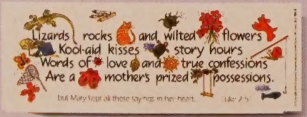
Colorful and catchy...these special bookmarks serve as a practical reminder that Mothers and Fathers are a gift from God. These bookmarks with their Scriptural quotations serve as an ongoing reminder that God blesses families. You receive an approximately equal number of each of the four bookmarks for either Mother's or Father's Day.

Order Code **MF-G** (Mother's Day **set of four**), **MF-H** (Father's Day **set of four**), Cost: **$6**/50(12+of each card), **$10**/100 (25 of each card), **$32**/400 (100 of each card).



Mother's Day (MF-T)

Father's Day (MF-U)



Mother's Day (MF-R)

Father's Day (MF-W)

Cards may also be purchased separately. Cost: **$.12**/1-49, **$.10**/50-399, **$.08**/400+

CHILDREN'S DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS

NEW THIS YEAR!

Savior, I Follow On

A CHILDREN'S PRAYER BOOK
FOR EACH DAY OF LENT

Beginning with an Ash Wednesday meditation on Jesus' birth *("What did it feel like to be born a human baby? It must have been humiliating.... And now the season of Lent urges us to be humble too")*, the very personal prayers in this little booklet lead children, step by step, through the life of Christ—with parables and miracles ("Since even winds and waves follow your commands, I feel safe following you"), teaching and touching, calling and caring—to Holy Week prayers about how hard it is sometimes to tell the truth and even harder "to keep silent when that is the right thing to do," and a Good Friday prayer about trusting in the Heavenly Father *("Because you died with that great faith, all those who follow you know that we can trust our heavenly Father too")* and a hopeful look ahead to Easter *("When dying is done, I will still be following you!")* Order Code **KL-D**, Cost **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

Easter ABC's

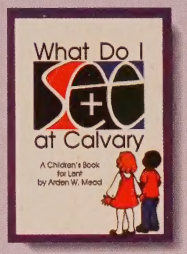
Easter ABC's is an inexpensive 36 page booklet, colorfully illustrated and written for children—that provides twenty-six prayers appropriate for Easter.

Easter ABC's emphasizes that Easter isn't just one day, it's a whole season—a whole new way of life. Ideal as a gift before or after Easter and especially on Easter Sunday for the parish children.

Easter ABC's Order Code **EP-1**, Cost: **$.57**/1-199, **$.54**/200-499, **$.49**/500+

Little Ways Through Lent

In this little booklet of daily Lenten prayer and devotion, children learn to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' sacrifice by making some small "sacrifices" of their own. Traditional Lenten practices like fasting, praying more and almsgiving are presented to elementary school children in simplified form. Children learn that Lenten activities strengthen the life of faith that comes to us in baptism as we choose once again to be followers of Jesus—even when we are called to make sacrifices of our own. Order Code **KL-B** Cost **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+



What Do I See At Calvary?

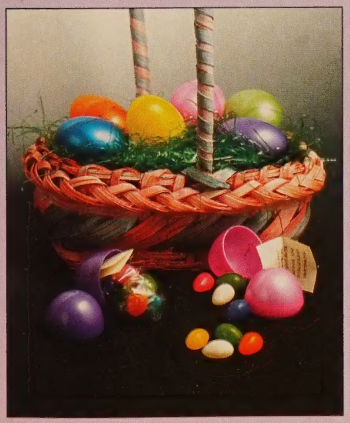
What Do I See at Calvary? invites children to keep their eyes open throughout their Lenten journey. There are lessons to be learned from so many of the things one can see along the way, from palm branches to Passover, from olive trees to crowing cocks, from thorns and nails to dice and darkness, from a torn curtain to a toppled tombstone.

Daily devotions include suggested Scripture readings and personal prayers. And since Sundays are special even in Lent (so the opening devotion instructs), on Sundays we look ahead to begin glimpsing where the story ends—a garden and a tomb, spices and a shroud, a stone and a seal, and an anxious angel. Order Code **KL-C**, Cost **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

MORE CHILDREN'S LENTEN RESOURCES

NEW THIS YEAR! **Jelly Bean Easter Eggs**

A FUN AND MEANINGFUL
GIFT FOR CHILDREN AT EASTER
PERFECT FOR EASTER EGG HUNTS!



Bunnies, easter eggs, candy. So much of the secular celebration of Easter is just that—secular and meaningless. This little candy treat for children is a wonderful gift idea that also proclaims the true meaning of Easter. Jesus Lives ... and We Do Too! Bright and colorful, each plastic egg contains eight jelly-beans and a special Easter message. A children's Easter Sermon is included with each order. Also a great idea for the Church's annual Easter Egg Hunt! Sold in sets of 12. Order Code **EG-G**. Cost: 1-4 sets/**$3.98** each; 5-9 sets/**$3.60**; 10+ sets/**$3.49**

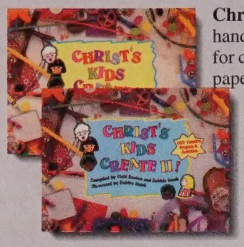
Power of God Trading Caps

NEW THIS YEAR!

A GREAT WAY TO PREACH TO THE CHILDREN
DURING LENT AND EASTER!

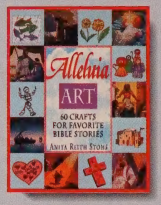
Trading-Cap-Mania is sweeping the nation. Few schoolyards are devoid of the little cardboard discs. Children love them, and for reasons many adults cannot perceive. So, these Trading Caps—WITH A UNIQUE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE—are sure to connect! The set of eight **Trading Caps for Easter** include festive seasonal art and phrases—Alleluia, He Is Risen, Easter Joy, Shine Jesus Shine, etc. They can be given away as a special Easter gift, or used to help "drive home the good news of Easter" in a special Easter Children's message (included!). **Trading Caps for Lent** focus on the seven words from the cross (plus Alleluia) and can either be given away as a set or used during the weeks of Lent (Sundays, or midweek services) in special Children's Messages. Nine messages are included—eight for use if the caps are given away separately, or one for use on a special Lenten day if the caps are distributed as a set. *A great way to preach to the children during Lent!* **Story of Salvation Trading Caps** are for use throughout the year, and give a delightful overview of the entire message of salvation—from Creation to Pentecost. The Creation, the Fall, The Birth, Death and Resurrection of Jesus—all are covered in a way that kids will understand. Again, 9 Children's Messages are included: 8 for use if the caps are given away separately, or one for use if all 8 caps are distributed as a set. **Lent** order code **GG-A**. **Easter** order code: **GG-B**. **Story of Salvation** order code: **GG-C**. Combine various sets to reach discount price. Cost: 1-11/**$.46**; 12-23/**$.42**; 24+/**$.38**

Christ's Kids Create I and II



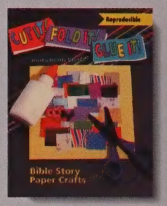
Christ's Kids Create! I and II are two of the handiest compilations of favorite craft projects for children 4 to 14. These 8 1/2" x 11" jumbo paperbacks each include over 100 three-dimensional projects, easy puppets, banners, and things to wear, hang up and give as gifts. And don't miss the list of ideas for creative centers in each volume. A great resource for teachers and parents. **Vol. I**, Order Code **CK-C**. For **Vol. II**, Order Code **CK-D**; Cost each: **$9.95.**

Alleluia Art



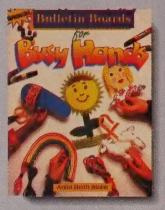
These 60 craft and art projects by Anita Reith Stohs reinforce Old and New Testament stories using easy-to-find materials. Includes cut-paper collages, crayon etchings and much more for 6 to 10 year-olds. Each project includes a Bible reference, materials list, directions and suggested variations. Paperbound, 64 pages. Cost **$7.99**, Order Code **21-3**

Cut It! Fold It! Glue It!



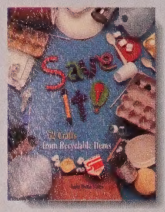
These simple craft ideas from Anita Reith Stohs require easily accessible and inexpensive paper products to make Bible learning memorable and fun. Over 45 crafts encourage 6 to 10-year-olds to exercise creativity while learning Old and New Testament Bible stories. All patterns are reproducible. Great for professional and volunteer teachers. 8 3/8 x 10 7/8" paperbound, 64 pages. Order Code **AB-B** Cost **$7.99**.

Bulletin Boards for Busy Hands



These interactive bulletin board ideas from Anita Reith Stohs reinforce 40 Old and New Testament stories by involving children in planning and assembling fantastic bulletin boards. Classroom teachers will find that 7 to 10-year-olds love these hands-on projects, including gathering materials, creating crafts and constructing bulletin boards. Flexible format is adaptable to meet the needs of each class. 8 3/8 x 10 7/8" paperbound, 64 pages. Order Code **AB-C** Cost **$7.99**.

Crafts from Recyclable Items



A great craft book for busy teachers and parents, **Save It!** includes a year's worth of ideas for Children's art projects. For ages 4-9, all projects are related to specific Bible stories. Use items otherwise thrown away; food containers, bottles, magazines, cups, etc. These ideas will help you and your young people make better use of God's earth through recycling. 64 pages, 8 1/2 x 11" size. Order Code **KB-9** Cost: **$7.99**

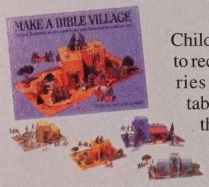
Creation Crafts

A book of craft ideas with a twist, **Creation Crafts** helps children (ages 4-8) learn about ecology and care of God's earth through 32 easy craft projects and activities. Each activity comes with a full-page pattern, using materials from around the house or classroom. Most require tracing or use of a copy machine. These crafts provide colorful decorations while giving kids an appreciation for the beauty and wonder of creation. 64 pages 8 1/2 x11. Paperbound. Order Code **CC-1**; Cost: **$5.99**

Making Bible Memorization Fun

Bible memorization can be fun for kids with 52 activities like these: collages, decorated place mats, "bowling" for Bible verses and more. Great for Sunday School, day or home school use. For ages 6 to 10. 64 pages, 8 1/2 x11, paperbound. Order Code **MZ-1**; Cost: **$7.99**

Make a Bible Village



Children will enjoy using their hands to recreate six well-known Bible stories in colorful, 3-dimensional tableaux. The six houses in which the stories take place and figures of the story characters punch out of card stock printed in full color. The book includes clear directions, 20 pages of punch out shapes and eight pages of Bible stories in easy to understand language. Scenes include the house where: the man was healed, the taxman lived, the little girl was healed, the man was cared for, Jesus was born, and the house the young man left behind. Excellent for families, individual children or classrooms. A great value! Six projects for about the cost of single-project kits. Order Code **M-VG**, Cost **$11.95**

Good News for Kids: 52 Gospel Talks (Series A)

This collection gives a year's worth of ideas for presenting Gospel lessons in words children ages 3-8 can enjoy and understand. Each talk includes a central Bible truth, thought-provoking questions, suggestions for visual aids and a closing prayer. Just the thing for pastors, Sunday School, preschool and day school teachers. 5 3/8 x 8 3/8" paperbound, 128 pages. Order Code **AB-E** Cost **$8.99**.

Journey with Jesus

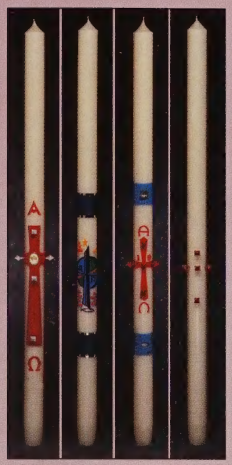
This 36 page booklet of fun, Bible based activities, games, poems and stories is designed for children to enjoy during summer vacation. A perfect give-away on the last day of school, as a take home gift at VBS, or as a Children's Sermon give-away, **Journey with Jesus** promises to keep youngsters learning Bible Stories at home and on vacation. It ties in with activities that kids enjoy—barbeques, trips, visits to the Zoo and more. Kids read fun poems, write their own prayers, color pictures, solve crossword puzzles, and play games. Cost: **$.69/** 1-11, **$.49**/12+ Order Code **JJ-1**

Christian Craft Ideas for Children

The Christian Craft Series offers 64-page books of Scripture-based crafts for children ages 4-10. Includes materials list, directions and patterns. Cost $**8.95 each**.

Christian Crafts from Egg Cartons contains more than 40 crafts made with colorful, foam egg cartons. Includes Noah's Big Boat, Pharaoh's Chariot, and much more. Uses KJV quotations. Order Code **KB-2. Christian Crafts from Cardboard Tubes** provides parents and teachers of Christian education with a variety of Bible-based crafts using cardboard tubes. Activities illustrate Bible stories and truths taught to children at home or church. Uses NIV quotations. Order **Code KB-3. Christian Crafts from Cardboard Containers** provides an assortment of activities designed to illustrate Bible stories from the Old and New Testaments. Projects range from building a village to bible time furniture to Noah's Ark. Uses NIV quotations. Order Code **KB-4. Christian Crafts from Milk Containers** contains projects to reinforce specific Bible stories, including Daniel in the Lions' Den, Noah's Ark, Chariot of Fire, and Tower of Babel. Uses NIV quotations. Order Code **KB-5**.

CANDLES



PC-1 PC-2 PC-3 PC-4

Paschal Candles

Paschal Candles –Now you can order Paschal Candles from Creative Communications. Exquisitely crafted by Emkay Candle in **51% Beeswax** in both raised wax and traditional designs. A set of incense nails is included with each candle. Standard Size 36" x 2". Other sizes upon request.

A) Christ Our Savior Design...beautiful raised wax design in red and gold. White nails are included. Order Code **PC-1,** Cost: **$74.30**.
B) Gloria Design, Order Code **PC-2,** Cost: **$57.85**.
C) Lumen Christi Design, Order Code **PC-3,** Cost: **$57.85**.
D) Plain Design, Order Code **PC-4**, Cost: **$44**.

Tenebrae Candles

Tenebrae Service Set— a white seven cup metal holder, and seven lavender straight side 9" tapers. Order Code **CL-D** for full set–cost: **$26.50**.

Order Code **CL-E** for 7 refill candles for Tenebrae Service Set. Cost: **$8.**

Easter Vigil Candles

Easter Vigil Kit– thin cierge tapers held by each congregation member for the Easter Vigil Service. Kits contain 100 10" candles and bobeches. Order Code **CL-G**, Cost: **$21.25.**

Christ Candles

Christ Candles–symbolizing the presence of Christ. Ideal for the Easter celebration.

Code **CC-6** 11" x 3"
Cost $19.15

Code **CC-7** 14" x 3"
Cost $18.60

Code **CC-5** 11" x 3"
Cost $27.60
(Raised Wax Design)

Confirmation Candle

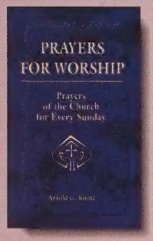
Confirmation Candle–Pure white wax candle, 8" X 7/8", decorated with a descending dove. Each candle comes with a presentation box. Order Code **CL-C** Cost: **$3.20** each.

Baptism Candles

My Baptism Candle 9 1/2" white candle with beautiful baptismal font. Order Code **CL-A**, Cost: **$2.20** each, or 50 for **$99.95.**

Baptismal Candle 51% pure beeswax 9" candle with Chi Rho/Dove design. Order Code **CL-B**– Cost: **$2.90** each, or 50 for **$139.**

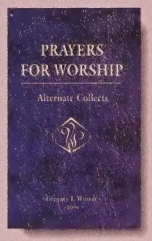
PRAYERS FOR WORSHIP



PW-7

Created specifically for use with the three-year lectionary, **Prayers for Worship—Alternative Collects** "seeks to expand the corporate prayer options for the congregation by offering three Collects for each Sunday," one each appropriate for Year A, Year B or Year C. These new prayers "collect...prayer thoughts in anticipation of the proclamation of the Word," specifically in the Gospel lesson. 75 pages. Lies flat in spiral bound format. Order Code **PW-8**; Cost **$8.95** each

Prayers for Worship–Prayers for the Church for Every Sunday presents helpful alternatives to prayers found in the lectionaries. These alternative prayers, usually 325-350 words in length, are unique to each day of the church year, including celebrations/festival days. Most offer opportunity for including the names of members in their petitions. 74 pages. Lies flat in spiral bound format. Order Code **PW-7**; Cost **$8.95** each



PW-8

JESUS OF NAZARETH VIDEO STUDY PROGRAM & SERVICES

Bible Study

• **God's Love In Jesus of Nazareth** is a new **6-part Lenten Bible study**. Included is a detailed Leader's Guide (paper, 40 pgs.) and 12 copies of student work sheets for each session. 25 minutes of video provide an integral part of each session in this exciting series. From Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his glorious resurrection, the video drama and genuine Bible study provide an ideal Lenten growth opportunity. Code **JV-3** Cost **$19.95**

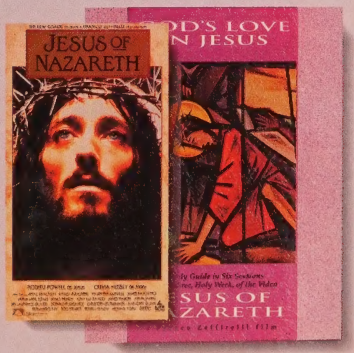
SAVE WITH A SPECIAL COMBINATION!
• **God's Love in Jesus of Nazareth Leader's Guide**, 12 copies of each session study questions for participants plus complete 3-cassette *Jesus of Nazareth* video. Code **JV-5** Cost **$59.95**

Lenten Worship Services

• **Six Lenten Worship Services** built around 25 minute episodes from *Jesus of Nazareth* use the video as the sermon. Colorful worship folders provide complete services with responsive readings, prayers, hymns and a Gospel lesson suited for each service. Perfect for a gathering at church or at home. Each order includes free worship leader's notes. **Pre-printed bulletins** in sets of 50 for each of 6 sessions. Code **JV-P** Cost: **$29**; 100 for each of 6 sessions, **$48**

Note: Churches who have ***Jesus of Nazareth*** *need order only the study or worship materials.*

Jesus of Nazareth is a highly acclaimed film portrayal of the life of Christ (3 tapes, 371 min., VHS) Code **V-45** Cost: **$49.95**



ASH WEDNESDAY

THOUGH THIS BODY BE DESTROYED, YET IN MY FLESH I SHALL SEE GOD.

This Ash Wednesday service sets the tone for the season by introducing such Lenten melodies as *O Sacred Head, Gethsemane* and *Consolation,* and allows the options of Imposition of Ashes and/or Holy Communion. Kits include leader's guide and music, 50 copies of the bulletin, and a sermon study. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **BY-A.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **BY-B.** Copyright Release Order Code **BY-W**, Cost: $12.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

This service for Ash Wednesday employs the traditional readings appointed for the day interspersed with stanzas of the hymn *'Take Up Your Cross' The Savior Said*, this service allows the options of Imposition of Ashes and/or Holy Communion. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily by Andrew Weyermann. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-A.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-B.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-W**, Cost: $12.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

A LIVING WILL

A Living Will is a dialogue service for Holy Thursday by Rev. Eldon Weisheit. It describes the 10 commandments as a "living will"—fulfilled in the **New Commandment**. Leaders involve the congregation in a dialog that explains God's **New Covenant** with his people in Holy Communion. In the kit you receive instructions, copies of the scripts and 50 copies of the service folder. Cost **$14.95** Order Code **LW-K**. Extra pre-printed bulletins **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LW-P**. Copyright Release Code **LW-C**, Cost: $12.

THIS IS MY BODY, GIVEN FOR YOU

This service for Maundy Thursday offers a unique order of confession and forgiveness. Parts of the liturgy set to the melody *Ebvenezer* and the eucharistic chants to the melody *Hamburg*—all a solemn yet moving setting for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Kits include leader's guide and music, 50 copies of the bulletin, and a sermon study. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **BY-C.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **BY-D.** Copyright Release Order Code **BY-X**, Cost: $12.

GOOD FRIDAY

LIFT HIGH THE CROSS

This solemn service for Good Friday begins with the praying of Ps.22 (perhaps from the rear of the church) interspersed with the striking stanzas of *Upon the Cross Extended*. Traditional readings from Is.53 and John 19 take the congregation to the foot of the cross. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily by Professor Andrew Weyermann. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-E.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-F.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-Y**, Cost: $12.

THE WAY OF SORROWS

The Way of Sorrows is a Good Friday Tenebrae Service in which ten successive candles are extinguished. The worship folder features **color illustrations** depicting the steps in our Savior's suffering. Each section of the service includes readings from **Isaiah 53** and the **Passion History** followed by a **responsive Psalm**. The service ends with the removal of the Christ Candle and the sounding of the *strepitus*. Orders of 50 worship folders or more include **Notes for Worship Leaders** with full text of all the readings and music. Order Code **GF-4** Cost: **$7**/50, **$10**/100.

TENEBRAE–The traditional Tenebrae service is moving and dramatic, but can be complicated—especially for small congregations. **Tenebrae** captures the depth of the traditional Good Friday service in a simple format. **Readings** (TEV translation) **& instructions** included for this dramatic service of darkness. Cost **$11.95** for the Leader's Guide, readings and 50 bulletins. Order Code **TB-K.** Extra bulletins, Order Code **TB-B**, Cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100.

IN THE DARKNESS–LIGHT A Good Friday service of darkness (tenebrae) in which the congregation participates with candles. Kits include: Pastor/Participant's Manual • Readings & Homily • 50 copies of the pre-printed service folders • 50 4"x 1/2" congregational candles & drip protectors. Order Code **SD-1.** Cost of Kit **$19.95.** Without candles cost is **$11.95.** Order Code **SD-C.** Additional pre-printed bulletins **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200. Order Code **SD-2**. Blank bulletins Order Code **SD-3** **$7.25**/100, **$28**/500. Additional candles and bobeches @ **$.16** each Order Code **CL-1.**

PALM SUNDAY

NEW THIS YEAR!

CRY ALOUD! offers exciting responsive readings to surround the Processional Gospel for Palm Sunday, as well as a new Processional Hymn to the tune of *Onward Christian Soldiers,* to involve the congregation actively in the fluctuating moods of this very special day ... and week. Colorful and sized 4" x 11" to attract attention. Cost: **$5**/100, **$20**/500. Order Code **PM-A**.

EASTER

THIS IS THE NIGHT! is a modern Easter Vigil service for Holy Saturday involving the images of fire and water and following the traditional four-part outline: **1)** *From Darkness to Light* **2)** *From Bondage to Freedom* **3)** *From Death to Life* **4)** *From Promise to Fulfillment.* Printed bulletins include all hymns and readings for the congregation. Kits include 50 pre-printed bulletins, extensive Notes for Worship Leaders, copies of the readings, and music. Cost of Kit: **$14.95**, Order Code **EV-6.** Extra bulletins **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **EV-E.**

RAISE YOUR ANTHEMS HIGH Ideal for use as a sunrise service or later on Easter morning, this simple order of worship overflows with triumphant praise, beginning with traditional shouts from Ps.118 and continuing through appointed readings for the day—all surrounded by exultant hymn stanzas. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-G.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-H.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-Z**, Cost: $12.

COME AND SEE...GO AND TELL

Ideal for sunrise gatherings, ***Come And See...Go And Tell*** includes the hymn *Hallelujah! Jesus Lives!* Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music and the Sermon. Order Code **AS-M** Cost: **$14.95 .** Additional bulletins cost **$9**/100, **$18**/100, Order Code **AS-E**. Copyright Release Order Code **AS-Z**, Cost: $12.

BY MY HAND? … FOR MY SAKE!

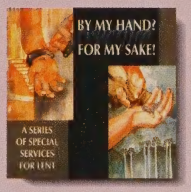
A WEEKLY LENTEN SERVICE SERIES FOR LENT

What is *your* role in the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ? In what ways might you be considered responsible? And in what ways do you benefit? Week by week these concerns are addressed—in first-person **monologs**—by biblical characters who actually *did* have a hand in the crucifixion of Christ. But earlier in the service, the pastor's **homily** lays the groundwork for what the congregation is about to experience.

Monolog scripts and pastoral homilies are provided in the *Leader's Guide* that is part of this kit—along with prayers for each service, suggested Scripture readings, and music for all the hymns included in the pre-printed orders of service. Purchase of the kit grants a copyright release to use or adapt any of the materials in the sample bulletins included.

For Ash Wednesday, **Adam** (or **Eve**—scripts are provided for both) recalls forbidden fruit once grasped, and its outcome: "To dust you shall return." For the next five weeks, parishes involved in **Lenten pulpit exchanges** will notice that the remaining services may be presented in almost any order: • **Nicodemus** • **Barabbas** • **Judas** • **Pilate** • and the father of the **Thief on the Right**. A complete reading script is provided for each character.

INCLUDED: A COMPACT DISC OR CASSETTE!



In addition, each kit includes a **CD** or **Cassette** for **all nine** services with music, sound effects, and voices to introduce the biblical character, and similar material to be played as soon as each monolog is finished. Also included are the monologs—to help parish actors "get into character" … and as a resource that might be offered to local radio stations for Lenten or Holy Week broadcast.

"THE OLD RUGGED CROSS"

For congregations that erect a special Lenten cross for the season (many use the trunks from last year's Christmas trees), suggestions are offered to add even more drama to the monologs. Barabbas, for example, may come down the aisle and hang a *chain* on the cross, symbolizing his unexpected freedom. At the end of his monolog, he reaches for the chain again, then leaves it there and departs, relieved. Judas throws down his *bag of coins* … and takes up a rope.

Cost for the complete **six-service kit** with **compact disc** is **$29.95**. Order Code **BH-1**; complete kit with **cassette** is **$29.95** Order Code **BH-S.**

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BH-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **BH-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

Publicize the service with a special **bulletin insert/promotional flier**. Order Code **BH-7** Cost: **$5**/100, **$20**/500.

PLUS, ADD THESE THREE HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Those who desire may supplement this series with three more services that continue the homily-plus-monolog format and theme. Each is ordered separately and includes all *Leader's Guide* features described above. Cost for each individual service kit: **$5.95**. Bulletin prices: Pre-printed bulletins for any of the four services below: **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Blank bulletins for any of the services below cost **$3.95**/50, **$7.75**/100, **$31**/500.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

A **Maundy Thursday** service with Holy Communion features the disciple **Peter**. Order Code **BH-4**. Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BH-B**. Blank bulletins Order Code **BH-X**.

GOOD FRIDAY

The **Good Friday** service features the **Centurion**. Order Code **BH-5**. Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BH-C**. Blank bulletins Order Code **BH-Y**.

EASTER SUNDAY

"Cry Alleluia!"—a festive service for **Easter Sunday** (which one might consider for a sunrise service)—features **Mary Magdalene**. Order Code **BH-6**. Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BH-D**. Blank bulletins Order Code **BH-Z**.

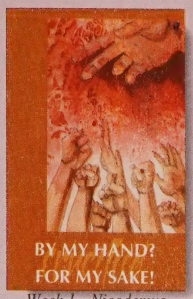
SATISFY YOUR LENTEN NEEDS WITH ITEMS FROM THIS KIT

If you need only services for **Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday** and **Easter,** order them separately! Prices above.

The **Ash Wednesday** service may be ordered without the rest of the series. Order Code **BH-3**. Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BH-A**. Blank bulletins Order Code **BH-W**.

The **Compact Disc/Cassette** will also be useful in these services. To order separately, **CD** Order Code **BH-U** Cost: **$5.95; Cassette** Order Code **BH-T** Cost: **$5.95**

Ash Wednesday—Eden



Week 1—Nicodemus

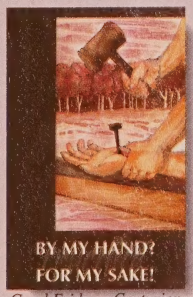
Week 2—Judas

Week 3—Barabbas

Week 4—Pilate

Week 5—Dismas' Father

Maundy Thursday—Peter



Good Friday—Centurion

Easter—Mary Magdalene

Promotional Flier—BH-7

GOD'S LOVE BREAKS THROUGH!

"God uses for his glory those people and things that are most perfectly broken." The sermons in this six-part Lenten series take *brokenness* seriously—both the kinds of brokenness in which human beings find themselves because of sin, and the kind of brokenness which God requires for true repentance. Week by week worshippers are assured that **God's Love Breaks Through!**

• **When Hearts Are Broken Tearfully**—based on Psalm 51 • **When Christian Love and Care Break Forth**—as depicted in a bottle of ointment broken for Jesus • **When Pride Is Shattered Shamefully**—Peter and the rooster • **When Human Strength Cannot Avail**—at Gethsemane • **When Other Answers Fail and Fall**—Pontius Pilate and Judas • **Where Lives Are Broken Helplessly**—the two thieves.

Pastors and parishes participating in **Lenten pulpit exchanges** will notice that once the first service ("Broken Hearts") is done in each pastor's home congregation, the others may be presented in any order.

Full-color bulletin covers depict each week's theme. **Bulletins** may be ordered blank or with pre-printed order of service. **The kit** includes homilies, prayers, and music for all included hymns, as well as samples of all the pre-printed bulletins. Purchase of the series grants permission to reproduce and/or adapt any of the service materials for local use.

A Unique Take-Home Reminder!

A unique optional feature offered with this series is an 8 1/2" x 11" **Table Top Triptych** which may be distributed at the first service. Its "broken heart" design (the theme of the first service) becomes the background for **five stickers** to be distributed at the remaining services.

Cost for the complete kit **$25.95**. Order Code **GB-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **GB-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **GB-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

Cost for the Triptych and sticker sets 1-99/**$.39**, 100+/**$.36**. Order Code **GB-L**.

Triptych and Stickers

Those who desire may augment this series with **two more services** that continue the "God's Love Breaks Through!" format and theme:

The **Maundy Thursday** service speaks of "Blood Outpoured and Body Broken" and includes an order of Holy Communion. Order Code **GB-3**. Additional printed bulletins Code **GB-A**. Blank bulletin Order Code **GB-C**.

The **Good Friday** service sees the curtain in the temple torn in two as Christ is crucified: "The Way Is Fully Open Now!" Order Code **GB-4**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **GB-B**. Blank bulletin Order Code **GB-D**.

Services cost **$5.95** each or order both for **$10.95**. Order Code **GB-6**. Kit includes music, prayers, homily and bulletin sample.

Printed bulletins for either of these two services cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Extra blank bulletins cost **$3.95**/50, **$7.75**/100, **$31**/500.

A **Bulletin Insert** to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **GB-7**, Cost **$5**/100, **$20**/500.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Here is a series of services that takes the time to consider seriously our Lord's humanity, the human body in which he wrought our salvation. Week by week, responsive calls to worship, Scripture readings, hymn stanzas, and prayers invite congregation members to focus their attention on:

- the feet of Christ
- the hands of Christ
- the ears of Christ
- the eyes of Christ
- the mouth of Christ
- the heart of Christ

Homilies on these topics, rich in biblical references, are scripted in such a way that they may be offered by two persons as dialog sermons—or by a single preacher.

Full-color **bulletin covers** feature stained glass art treasures. Bulletins may be ordered with order of service printed, or with inside pages and back cover blank. Purchase of the kit grants permission to reproduce and/or adapt any of the service materials.

Pastors and parishes participating in **Lenten pulpit exchanges** will notice that the six services may be offered in any order. A pastor (team) from each congregation could present its assigned service in neighboring churches on a rotating schedule.

Along with a full set of scripts and music for the theme hymn, the kit includes samples of all six **pre-printed bulletins.** These bulletins contain a detailed order of service, complete with responsive opening dialog, psalmody, prayers, and listed Scriptures. **Notes for Worship Leaders** include hymn suggestions and other information.

Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **BD-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BD-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **BD-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

As an added feature, those who so desire may continue this series with **three more services**:

Maundy Thursday: *The Blood of Christ* (with emphasis on Holy Communion) service Order Code **BD-3**, printed bulletin Order Code **BD-A,** blank bulletin Order Code **BD-X**

Good Friday: *The Body of Christ* (a close look at Christ's crucifixion) service Order Code **BD-4**, printed bulletin Order Code **BD-B,** blank bulletin Order Code **BD-Y**

Easter: *The Risen Body of Christ* (series summary: "You are the body of Christ!") service Code **BD-5**, printed bulletin Order Code **BD-C,** blank bulletin Order Code **BD-Z**

Services cost **$5.95** each or order all three for **$15.95** Order Code **BD-6**. Each service includes leader's guide, pre-printed bulletin sample, music and sermon.

Extra printed bulletins cost: **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100.
Extra blank bulletins cost: **$3.95**/50, **$7.75**/100, **$31**/500.

A **bulletin insert** to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **BD-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

In Christian art over the centuries the Cross has taken various forms, many of them rich in meaning. This Lenten series uses shape, history, background, and color to trace, step by step, the suffering and death of our Lord and apply its meaning to the lives of God's people today.

• Ashen gray (for Ash Wednesday), the *Crusaders' Cross* begins the journey. • The *Hunters' Cross* (which seems to be made of arrow tips) takes us to our Lord's betrayal and arrest. • The royal blue *Sovereign's Cross and Orb* sees the King of kings on trial before a Roman ruler. • The *Cross of Lorraine*, once a symbol of WWII French resistance, speaks of constancy in the midst of change. • Blood red, the three-stepped *Cross of the Ascent* leads to Calvary, urging faith, hope, and love. • Even today in Europe and Canada, a green cross identifies a pharmacy; so the *Arced Cross* speaks of ultimate healing.

Bulletins may be ordered with service printed, or blank. Pre-printed bulletins include opening litany, prayer of the week, Scripture readings listed, responsive psalmody, theme hymn stanzas, a hymned setting of the Lord's Prayer, and responsive benediction.

Samples of the printed **bulletins** are included in the kit, along with **music** for the hymns (only the opening hymn each week need be chosen locally; suggestions are offered), **homilies** and **prayers** for each service. Cost for the complete kit **$25.95.** Order Code **CW-1.** *For a sample only, Order Code* ***XC-W.***

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **CW-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **CW-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$20**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**. These blank bulletins are available in a large 8.5" x 14" size. See our bulletin selections.

PLUS, ADD THESE THREE HOLY WEEK SERVICES! As an added feature, those who so desire may continue this series with three more services.

Maundy Thursday: The *Rounded Cross* with its three-in-one adornments speaks of God's great love and loyalty, made ours in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Code **CW-3**. Additional printed bulletins Code **CW-A**. Blank bulletin Code **CW-X**.

Good Friday: The black *Star Cross* proclaims Christ's saving work "finished" and looks to its far-reaching effects. Code **CW-4**. Additional printed bulletins Code **CW-B**. Blank bulletin Code **CW-Y**.

Easter: The golden *Flowered Cross* bespeaks Christ's resurrection victory. Code **CW-5**. Additional printed bulletins Code **CW-C**. Blank bulletin Code **CW-Z**.

Services cost **$5.95** each or order all three for **$15.95.** Code **CW-6**. Each kit includes music, prayers, and homily.

Printed bulletins for these three services cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Extra blank bulletins cost **$3.95**/50**$7.75**/100, **$31**/500.

PUBLICIZE WITH A SPECIAL BULLETIN INSERT! A Bulletin Insert to publicize the services is available. Code **CW-7** Cost $5/100, **$20**/500.

TAKE HOME PRAYER CARDS!

Please notice the set of six **Lenten Prayer Cards** which incorporate illustrations and prayers from this series. Hand them out at each service, or use them to publicize midweek services by handing them out the previous weekend. Order **sets** of all six cards, Order Code **CW-K**, Cost **$15**/50, **$25**/100, **$110**/500, **$200**/1000. Or order the cards **separately**, specifying the Order Codes printed to the right, Cost **$4**/50, **$6**/100, **$25**/500, **$40**/1000.

Ash Wednesday Crusaders' Cross

Week 2 Hunters' Cross

Week 3 Sovereign's Cross

Week 4 Cross of Lorraine

Week 5 Cross of the Ascent

Week 6 Arced Cross

Maundy Thursday Rounded Cross

Good Friday Star Cross

Easter Sunday Flowered Cross

Bulletin Insert (CW-7)

CW-L

CW-D

CW-E

CW-F

CW-G

CW-H

Special Prayer Cards

Great Lenten Reminders for the Home

CW-J
(Good Friday)

WORDS THAT LAST FOREVER

This is a **seven-part** series (the seventh service, *Into Your Hands*, is appropriate for Good Friday) based on the familiar and beloved **seven words of Christ from the cross.**

The orders of service are simple and direct, each emphasizing that week's Word from the Cross in • a responsive opening litany stressing the Word of God and employing the Word from the Cross • responsive psalmody • weekly theme stanzas of *Our Savior Speaks in Grace* • a three-stanza office hymn based on the day's Word • responsive prayers that have the congregation praying what they have heard and sung.

Homilies apply our Lord's timeless statements to the times in which we live. The homilies are written in such a way that they may be delivered by a single preacher—or by three different interacting voices. With some planning, this series might well be used by groups of congregations which share pastors and pulpits for special Lenten services.

Starkly dramatic **bulletins** may be ordered with service printed, or blank. Samples of all the preprinted bulletins are included in the kit, along with **music** for the included hymns, **homilies** and **prayers** for each service. Cost for the complete kit **$25.95.** Order Code **WL-1.** *For a sample only, Order Code XW-L.*

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **WL-P**, 50 for each of seven weeks, Cost: **$34**, 100 for each of seven weeks, Cost: **$52**, 200 for each of seven weeks, Cost: **$92**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **WL-2**, 50 for each of seven weeks **$25**, 100 for each of seven weeks **$45**, 200 for each of seven weeks **$82**. See page 20 to order individual blanks.

PLUS, ADD THESE TWO HOLY WEEK SERVICES!

As an added feature, those who desire may expand this series with two more services which follow the same format.

Maundy Thursday: 'FOR YOU' - a service based on our Lord's Words of Institution, includes special hymned stanzas to serve as the preface and thanksgiving in the celebration of Holy Communion. Order code **WL-3**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **WL-A**. Blank bulletin Order Code **B-32.**

Easter: 'ALLELUIA!' - translates somber elements of other services in this series into a major-key celebration of our Lord's resurrection. A new hymn (to a familiar tune), *Now Let the Glorious News Be Heard,* recalls the Seven Last Words, now fulfilled in victory. Order code **WL-4**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **WL-B**. Blank bulletin Order Code **B-34**.

Services cost **$5.95** each or order both for **$10.95.** Order Code **WL-8**. Kit includes music, prayers, homily & bulletin sample.

Printed bulletins for either of these two services cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Extra blank bulletins cost **$3.95**/50, **$7.75**/100, **$31**/500

PUBLICIZE WITH A SPECIAL BULLETIN INSERT! A Bulletin Insert to publicize the services is available. Code **WL-7** Cost $5/100, **$20**/500.

SEND SERVICES HOME—WITH PRAYER CARDS! Please notice the set of seven **Lenten Prayer Cards** which incorporate illustrations and prayers from this series. Hand them out at each service, or use them to publicize midweek services by handing them out the previous weekend. Order **sets of all seven cards**, Order Code **WL-L**, Cost **$17.50**/50, **$29**/100, **$120**/500, **$229**/1000. Or order the cards separately, specifying the Order Codes printed to the right, Cost **$4**/50, **$6**/100, **$25**/500, **$40**/1000.

Ash Wednesday Forgive

Week 2 Paradise

Week 3 Behold

Week 4 Forsaken

Week 5 Thirst

Week 6 Finished

Maundy Thursday For You

Good Friday Hands

Easter Sunday Alleluia

Bulletin Insert (WL-7)

WL-D

WL-E

WL-F

WL-G

WL-H

WL-J

WL-K
(Good Friday)

Special Prayer Cards

Great Lenten Reminders for the Home

1-800-325-9414 8-5 CST

SILENT WITNESSES

• The Thorns • The Robe • The Nail • The Spear • The Shroud • The Stone. If only these things could speak! What might they tell us?

Silent Witnesses is a series of six services in which the chief speaker each week takes the role of one of the *things* associated with our Lord's suffering and death, describing and interpreting the event and its meaning from that object's point of view.

The homilies may be offered as two-person **dialogs** in which the objects are "interviewed" by a second participant—or, if you prefer, they may be offered as **monologs** simply by omitting the part of the interviewer in each script.

Each kit includes notes for worship leaders, multiple copies of the sermons, pre-planned services with samples of the six pre-printed bulletins, and a sample bulletin publicity insert. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **WS-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **SW-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **WS-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **WS-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

For a sample,** Order Code **XW-S

THE HILLS OF LENT

By means of hymns and dramatic homilies, the congregation is led on a biblically chronological journey to "mountain-top experiences" which all focus on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.

• At **Mount Moriah** Abraham's faith is tested and strengthened • At **Mount Sinai** Moses and the Israelites receive the word of God • At **Mount Carmel** Elijah calls for faith and faithfulness • Jesus joins the faithful in worship at **Mount Zion** • On **Mount Olivet** Jesus assures us that we too are the children of God • At **Mount Calvary** we view "God's own sacrifice complete" (This service may be used for Holy Week).

Services begin with the "Psalms of Ascent." Dramatic homilies involve a narrator and as many as four other readers. The congregation participates in the homilies with the singing of successive stanzas of *Unto the Hills*. Musical notations for the organist are provided to add to the drama of the presentations.

Each kit includes: sermon scripts, Worship Leader's Guide, Scripture readings, samples of each of the pre-printed bulletins and bulletin insert. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **HL-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **HL-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29** 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **HL-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **HL-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

For a sample,** Order Code **XH-L

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY

Besides what people *said* and *did* during the week of our Lord's Passion, what was going through their ***minds***? And what if we were able to *hear* these "thoughts along the way" to Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, our Lord's trials and crucifixion, the tomb and the Resurrection?

Each week's dramatic homily involves four participants—the *narrator* and *three readers* whose lines offer ***thoughts*** of such characters as John, Peter, Judas, Pilate, Herod, soldiers, female followers of Jesus, a cross-making carpenter, and even a befuddled Easter angel—three such characters each week.

The first service is adaptable to include the Ash Wednesday imposition of ashes; the final service could serve for Easter sunrise worship.

Along with a full set of scripts and music for the theme hymn,the kit includes samples of all six **pre-printed bulletins** offering a detailed order of service for each week complete with responsive opening dialog, psalmody, prayers, and listed Scriptures. **Notes for Worship Leaders** include hymn suggestions and other information. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95.** Order Code **SH-1**.

For a sample,** Order Code **XW-S

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **SH-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **SH-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **SH-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

THUS IT IS WRITTEN

By means of "first person" homilies (which may be offered by the pastor or by three different members of the congregation, each serving for two consecutive weeks), this Lenten series allows Mark, Luke, and John to tell—in person!—why they wrote about our Lord's Passion the way they did.

Thus, in the first service, "Mark" describes his account of **Gethsemane**; in the second service he discusses the **crucifixion**. In the second pair of services, "Luke" covers the same two incidents from his point of view; and in the last two homilies, "John" explains his particular emphases.

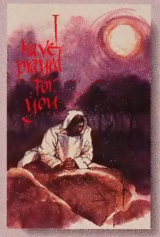
The **six worship folders** for these services feature full-color original cover artwork. The *Gospel reading* for each week is printed on the back page. **Pre-printed orders of service** on the inside pages include an opening Responsive Dialog drawn from the writings of the week's "guest evangelist," suggested Scriptures, responsive psalmody, and a series theme hymn. Samples of all six are included in the kit. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **WT-1**. *For sample only, Order Code XW-T.*

Pre-printed bulletins order code **WT-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **WT-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **WT-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

Week 1

Week 2



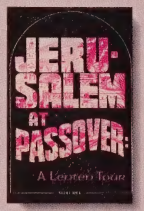
Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

JERUSALEM AT PASSOVER: A LENTEN TOUR



Suppose you had signed up for a guided tour of Jerusalem during the week of Passover in the year A.D.30 … what might you have seen and heard?

The audio dramas in this Lenten series are narrated by a typical travel agency "tour guide" on **an imaginary visit to the Holy City**, who offers historical, cultural, and religious commentary on the sights you are seeing, just as such a person might have done almost 2000 years ago, had there been conducted tours then. As many as 8 other readers participate. **Each week a new stop**: • The Temple • Passover • The Mount of Olives • The Palace of the High Priest • Fortress Antonia • Skull Hill. (At each of these, you realize, we will "accidentally" confront Jesus!)

The kit includes: leader's manual, individual scripts for each participant, orders of service, homilies, prayers, suggested psalms and hymns. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **JT-1**. *Sample only, Code XJ-T.*

Coordinated **blank bulletins** for each week's tour: Order Code **JT-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **JT-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**

OVERHEARD: CONVERSATIONS BY THE CROSS

Did various people who were involved in our Lord's Passion ever have an opportunity to talk with one another about it? People like • **Malchus & Mark** • **Barabbas & Caiaphas** • **Pilate and his wife** • **Simon & the centurion** • **Mary & John** • **the two thieves**.

Each audio drama in this series begins with a sermonic introduction to set the scene; a sermonic conclusion then comments and draws appropriate points. All these items are included in the reading scripts.

Each kit also includes a professionally produced **cassette tape** to help the congregation's actors "get the feel" for their parts. This tape may also be offered to a local radio station as a community service, or used by other groups in the parish. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **OH-1**. *Sample only, Order Code XO-H.*

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **OH-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. Blank Bulletins Order Code **OH-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **OH-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

CROSS EXAMINATIONS

Seven services—one for each week of Lent and a final Holy Week summary presentation for either Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, or even Easter sunrise.

With scripts in hand, two participants each week begin at lectern and pulpit and then move about the chancel, assuming the roles of ancient characters (like Annas and Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Peter and Mark, St. Paul and Cyprian of Carthage) as well as modern ones (a reporter, a TV talk show host, a psychologist and an athletic coach, two businessmen at lunch, a busy dentist) as they deal with **the meaning of the Cross** in daily life, then and now.

Each kit includes sermon/drama scripts, samples of each of the seven bulletins and the publicity insert, and *Notes for Worship Leaders* which include directions for presenting the dialogs, as well as suggested hymns, Scriptures and prayers. Cost for the kit **$24.95** Order Code **CM-1**. *Sample only, Order Code XC-M.*

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **CM-P**, 50 for each of 7 weeks **$29**, 100 for each of 7 weeks **$49**, 200 for each of 7 weeks **$92**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **CM-2**, 50 for each of 7 weeks **$24**, 100 for each of 7 weeks **$44**, 200 for each of 7 weeks **$82**

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **CM-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

1-800-325-9414 8-5 CST

CARDS FOR TEACHERS AND PUPILS

SK-1

SK-2

SK-3

Creative's seven new cards for your school are perfect for thanking teachers, parents and students. Sally Beck's brilliant art plus a Christian message and Scripture verse grace every card. You may combine any number of the seven different cards to reach a quantity discount price. Cards are supplied flat with quality, matching envelopes.

Teacher Thank you: *Your love of the Lord is reflected in the face and heart of every child in your class. Thanks for the faithful witness.* plus Ps. 34:11. Order Code **SK-1**, *Well done! Noah's Ark—a monumental task, an incredible act of faith, a spectacular witness to God's love. You've been building arks—and we're grateful.* plus Heb. 11:7. Order Code **SK-2**

Parent Volunteer: *Hats off to a very special volunteer. Hats off to a very special friend of our school. Hats off to a very special worker in God's kingdom.* plus Eph. 1:15-16. Order Code **SK-3**, *Thanks a bunch—from our bunch! You give so much to our school.* plus Ps. 26:7. Order Code **SK-4**, **Student Recognition:** *You're a star! Star gazing, Twinkling star, Seeing stars, Star of the show. Today YOU are the STAR - Congratulations.* plus Job 38:7. Order Code **SK-5**, **Student Birthday:** *Birthday blessings, friend of Jesus. May your day be filled with fun. Be at peace and sleep with angels, When your birthday day is done.* plus (canticle) *"Young women will dance for joy and men young and old will make merry."* Order Code **SK-6**, **Sick Child.** *How sad we feel to see your empty seat. We hope and pray you'll soon be on your feet.* plus Eph. 6:15. Code **SK-7** Cost **$.58** each/25-49, **$.48** each/50-99, **$.42** each/100+.

SK-4

SK-5

SK-6

SK-7

SUNDAY SCHOOL POSTCARDS

For First-Timers, Absentees and Birthdays

SB-E

SB-G

SB-F

Postcards to help you build up your Sunday School! Bright, youthful art by Sally Beck, plus a greeting, a short Scripture verse, and space for your message on the mailing side. The 3 1/2 x 5 1/2" cards come in packs of 25. Cost: **$3.95**

You added something special *to our class today. Thanks. Please come again. I Cor. 12:27.* Order Code **SB-E**

Happy Birthday:

Today's a day to sing and shout ... *And what's this happiness about? A friend of ours was born today and this is what we want to say: Jesus bless you on your birthday—and every day.* Psalm 132:9. Order Code **SB-F**

Hooray! Today is your birthday. *Jesus and your friends at Sunday School are happy for you.* Order Code **SB-G**

Nobody else can fill your shoes *(Come join us next Sunday! 1 Cor 12:4).* Order Code **SB-A**.

We're all smiles *(thinking about seeing you again in Sunday School. Phil. 1:7)* Order Code **SB-B**.

Don't skip the fun *(See you in Sunday School! Ps. 47:1)* Order Code **SB-C**.

SB-C

SB-A

SB-B

CHRISTIAN RUBBER STAMPS

RC-1

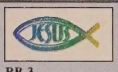
RC-2

RB-4

RC-3

RB-1

RB-2



RB-3

RC-4

Pastors, teachers—use these to brighten your school papers or parish letters, envelopes, seasonal gifts or handouts. Here's a collection of contemporary Christian art on rubber stamps and a choice of multi-color, opaque pigment stamp pads for unexcelled color and resolution quality. Stamps approx. 1 1/2 x 1 1/2" size.

Alleluia; Order **RC-1**, *By His Stripes;* Order **RC-2**, *He Hath Borne;* Order **RC-3**, *He is Risen;* Order **RC-4**, *Peace on Earth;* Order Code **RB-1,** *Joy to the World*; Order Code **RB-2,** *Jesus*; Order Code **RB-3,** *God Bless You*; Order Code **RB-4,** Cost **$5.00**/1-4; $**4.00/5+** each. Pick any four and save, Order Code **RB-7,** Cost **$16.00**. Large 12-color rainbow stamp pad, Order Code **RB-L**, Cost **$14.50**/1-4; **$11.95**/5+. 3-color stamp pad *Advent/Christmas* (metalic gold, deep red and green), Order Code **RB-C**, Cost **$6.95**/1-4; **$5.95**/5+. 3-color stamp pad *Easter/Spring* (yellow, medium green and violet), Order Code **RB-S**, Cost **$6.95**/1-4; **$5.95**/5+

BALLOONS

These colorful balloons add just the right accent to many church, school and Sunday School functions. Catchy slogans, cheerful illustrations highlight the fellowship when Christian children gather for play, study and worship. Order mixed bags of colors and slogans.

Order Code **CB-3**, Cost: **$8**/50, **$15**/100, **$110**/1000. Or, order quantities of each individual balloon, Order Code **CB-4**. Please specify your choice.

Flying time with helium 10 hours.

Custom Balloons

Call today for the information and prices packet **CB-X** for **custom** balloons to help celebrate Holidays, Anniversaries, and other special occasions in the life of your church. We will put our artwork and your message together in this custom product. Balloons are 11-inch round. You may choose a one color balloon with a one color imprint. Great for special events or for use by groups in the church or school.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 1996

EVERYONE'S A WINNER ON GOD'S TEAM!

God's Winning Team is a top-seeded choice for your 1996 VBS program. Packed with five days of fun, faith-building lessons; creative, lesson-reinforcing crafts; and active learning materials. It's all designed to make your team cheer for the greatest news of all—victory is ours through Jesus! Using the team as a metaphor for the people of God, *God's Winning Team* explores a new theme each day. As usual, teaching tools abound, like Rudi the puppet, sports items, colorful advertising pieces, and special stuff for the older youth. Churched or unchurched students will learn about Jesus and grow in their relationship with Him.

FREE VBS catalog of all VBS materials and support items for 1996 Order Code **VB-C**

VBS Curriculum for 6 Age Levels
Preschool, ages 3-5
Kindergarten, completed Kindergarten
Primary, completed grades 1 and 2
Junior, completed grades 3 and 4
Preteen, completed grades 5 and 6
Junior High, completed grades 7 and 8

Five Day Game-Plan
Day 1: *Chosen for God's Team*
Day 2: *Jesus my Savior and Teammate*
Day 3: *God's Team Grows*
Day 4: *God Protects His Team*
Day 5: *God's Team Worships.*

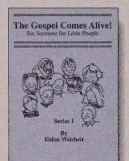
Starter Kit—Everything you need to coach your VBS team
• Director's Guide: Step-by-step manual for goal-setting, program development, volunteer recruitment, advertising and more. • Teachers Guides: Beginning or experienced teachers will find age-appropriate lessons and teaching approaches that are fun to use. • Student Materials: Your team will love these colorful leaflets and contemporary magazines with exciting visuals. • Buddy Box Crafts: Your VBS will score with these imaginative projects that reinforce every lesson. • Promotional Pak: Samples of everything you need to recruit and organize your team. **Starter Kit** *($60 value)* Order Code **VB-1** Cost just **$34.99**

CHILDREN'S SERMON RESOURCE KITS

Twelve sermons have been prepared by Pastor Eldon Weisheit, nationally known author of more than 18 books of children's sermons. Each kit includes **six sermons** in a small booklet and **10 each of the special resources** that fit the sermons ...no more shopping or gathering things together. They all come to you in the **Children's Sermon Resource Kit**! Cost for each kit: **$17.95**

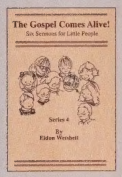
According to Pastor Weisheit, "These sermons are the kind that kids can easily relate to and, as we all know, many times we are able to preach to the adults through the children, touching upon the mystery that there is still something of the child in each of us...good thing! Because the kingdom of God belongs to little children."

For each of the kits, you can order extra units of the resources. Each extra unit brings you 10 more of the resources for each of the 6 sermons in the kit. Order Code **KE-1** (for series 1), **KE-3** (for series 3) or **KE-4** (for series 4). Cost **$10** for each unit of 10 resources for each of the sermons in that kit, 60 resources in all.

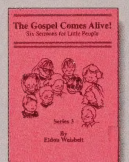


Series 1 Great for the Fall Season!
6 sermons & resources for use Fall/Winter Order code **KK-1**. Resources include: **• 6 sermon cards with cover • 10 ID cards • 10 posters • 30 Thanksgiving stickers • 10 sheets of wrapping paper • 30 Christmas napkins • 10 bedtime prayer cards**

NEW THIS YEAR!

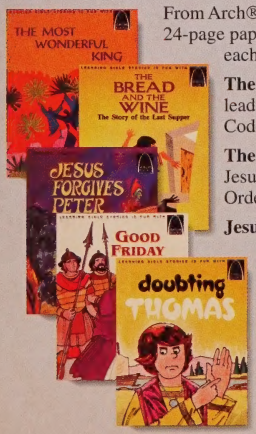


Series 4
6 sermons & resources for use throughout the year Order code **KK-4**. Resources include: **• 10 erasers • 10 balls • 10 binder clips • 10 buttons • 10 stickers • 10 nubs**



Series 3
6 sermons & resources for use throughout the year Order code **KK-3**. Resources include: **• 6 sermon cards with cover • 10 4-fold prayer cards • 10 Grace/Faith Medallions • 20 "Thank You" Stickers • 10 Huggable posters • 10 pin-on buttons • 10 children's Gospel gift certificates**

ARCH® BOOKS FOR LENT & EASTER



From Arch® Books, trusted by generations of Christian parents, come five colorful 24-page paperbacks for the season of Lent/Easter. Aimed at children ages 5 to 9, each sturdy 6"x8" book features a story in rhyme with colorful illustrations.

The Most Wonderful King (Jesus' Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem leads to his suffering, death, resurrection and ascent into heaven). Order Code **CH-B**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.99**; 4+ **$1.59**.

The Bread and the Wine: The Story of the Last Supper (We watch Jesus' celebration of the Last Supper through the eyes of a young boy). Order Code **CH-C**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.99**; 4+ **$1.59**.

Jesus Forgives Peter (We follow Peter from the Last Supper to his repeated denials and the happy ending of Jesus' forgiveness). Order Code **CH-8**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.99**; 4+ **$1.59**.

Good Friday (From Palm Sunday through Easter morning's resurrection we go with our Lord on his most difficult mission—death on the cross). Order Code **CH-A**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.99**; 4+ **$1.59**.

Doubting Thomas (After Jesus called Thomas to follow him, the disciple saw wonders but doubted the greatest miracle of all). Order Code **CH-9**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.99**; 4+ **$1.59**.

RITES OF PASSAGE

Unlike the traditional prayer book aimed at the average teenager, **Rites of Passage** promises to connect! Part prayer book, part journal, this guided journey through the passages of life (Baptism, Confirmation, Family, Marriage, Career and beyond) invites the reader to join in the writing of the book—exploring their growing faith, their hopes and ideals, their expanding intellect, and their sense of fun. Written in glib, engaging langauge, **Rites of Passage** includes short stories, cartoons, prayers, brief devotions, Christian interpretations of popular songs and poetry, and lots questions. Activities include writing prayers, listing career goals, making collages, and journaling. Order Code **CN-2** Cost: 1-3/**$6.99**, 4-9/**$5.99**, 10+/**$4.99**

PARISH SERVICE PINS & MORE

With this special recognition program each child begins with an enrollment pin (Code: L-00). At the end of the first year, the one year pin is given (Code: L-01). A new pin is given at the end of each year of enrollment. This system eliminates the worry of pupils losing pins.

Enrollment pin shown actual size, numbered pins are same size as enrollment pin.

L-01 THRU L-03

Pins L-00 – L-10

To order specify code (**L-00**-enrollment or **L-01** through **L-10**-year pins) and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$.69**/1-9 pins, **$.59**/10-24 pins, **$.55**/25-49 pins, **$.53**/50-99 pins, **$.49**/100+ pins. You may mix pins for larger discount.

Pins L-11 – L-17

Recognize the various ministries in your Parish with these new service lapel pins. These recognition pins are **gold plated with enamel colors** and are gift boxed. All service lapel pins pictured above can be mixed to receive quantity discount pricing.
To order specify code and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$3.50**/1-9 pins, **$2.99**/10-24 pins, **$2.79**/25-49 pins, **$2.69**/50-99 pins, **$2.49**/100+ pins.

Pins L-20 – L-44

Recognize members for the services they offer with these service pins. Same design and color apply to each pin. Pins can be mixed to receive quantity discount pricing. To order specify code and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$3.00**/1-9 pins, **$2.50**/10-24 pins, **$2.39**/25-49 pins, **$2.29**/50-99 pins, **$2.19**/100+ pins.

Order Codes:

L-20 Acolyte
L-21 Altar Server
L-24 Choir
L-25 Confirmation
L-26 Educator
L-27 Eucharistic Minister
L-28 Godparent
L-29 Hospitality
L-30 Lay Minister
L-31 Lay Reader
L-32 Lay Visitor
L-33 Lector
L-34 Minister of Care
L-35 Pastoral Care
L-37 Secretary
L-38 Service
L-39 Sponsor
L-40 Treasurer
L-41 Usher
L-42 Volunteer
L-43 Youth Choir
L-44 Youth Minister

PERSONAL PENDANTS FOR SPECIAL OCCASSIONS

Choir Cross

Acolyte Cross

Solid bronze, and inlaid with enamel colors, on 33-inch sturdy brown cord.
Order Code **L-64 $7.50**/1-3; **$6.99**/4-10; **$6.49**/11+
Order Code **L-65 $7.50**/1-3; **$6.99**/4-10; **$6.49**/11+

Jerusalem Cross

This Jerusalem Cross is made of heavy die struck bronze on a brown cord and comes gift boxed. Order Code: **L-18** Cost: **$6.00**/1-3, **$5.49**/4-10, **$4.99**/ 11+

Contemporary Cross

This contemporary cross is die struck bronze with enamel colors and comes with a 24 inch gold plated chain (gift boxed). Verse on back is Isaiah 43:1, "I have called you by your name you are mine."
Order Code: **L-19** Cost: **$8.50**/1-3, **$7.99**/4-10, **$7.49**/11+

Bookmark

This Book Mark is made of pewter on a blue grosgrain ribbon and comes gift boxed. The verse is Proverbs 3:9, "In All Thy Ways" Order Code: **L-48** or "Alive in the Spirit," Order Code **L-66.** Cost for either: **$5.00**/1-3, **$4.74**/4-10, **$4.49**/11+

Paperweight

Makes a Great Gift!

Marbel Paperweight. 2" x 2" Carrara marble. Order Code: **L-67 $8.50**/1-3; **$7.99**/4-10; **$7.49**/11+

LENTEN BULLETINS

ASH WEDNESDAY

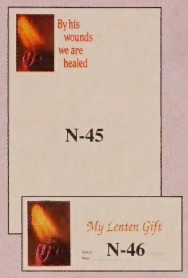
RM-D (8.5x11)
RM-E (8.5x14)

H-15 (8.5x11)
M-15 (8.5x14)

GENERAL LENT

N-40 (8.5x11)
N-41 (8.5x14)

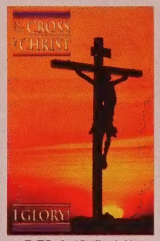
HL-S (8.5x11)



N-45
N-46

N-43 (full view 8.5x11) • **N-44** (8.5x11)
LC-F (coin holder)

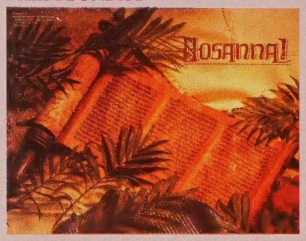
N-48 (8.5x11)
N-49 (8.5x14)



LU-1 (8.5x11)
LU-2 (8.5x14)

F-80 (8.5x11)
F-81 (8.5x14)

PALM SUNDAY

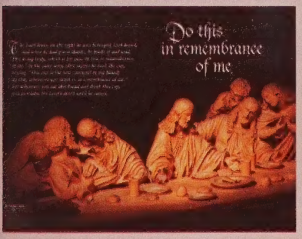


N-50 (full view 8.5x11)
N-51 (not full view 8.5x14)

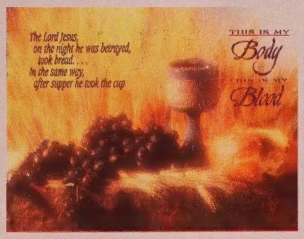
A-80 (8.5x11)
A-81 (8.5x14)

N-52 (8.5x11)

MAUNDY THURSDAY/COMMUNION



B-73 (8.5x11 full view)



E-35 (full view 8.5x11)

N-53 (8.5x11)
N-54 (8.5x14)

A-84 (8.5x11)
A-85 (8.5x14)

N-55 (8.5x11)
N-56 (8.5x14)

GOOD FRIDAY

N-57 (8.5x11)
N-58 (8.5x14)

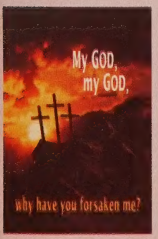
I-70 (8.5x11)

B-32 (8.5x11)

N-59 (full view 8.5x11)
N-60 (not full view 8.5x14)

N-61 (8.5x11)
N-62 (8.5x14)

H-21 (8.5x11)



N-63 (8.5x11)

B-31 (8.5x11)

N-64 (8.5x11)
N-65 (8.5x14)

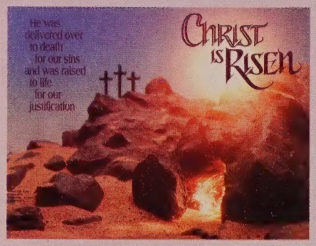
JC-2 (8.5x11)

CM-R (8.5x11)

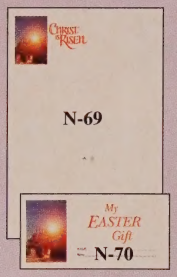
N-42 (8.5x11)

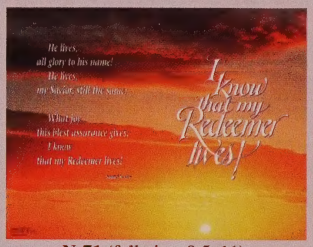
B-33 (8.5x11)

BULLETINS FOR HOLY WEEK, EASTER AND BEYOND

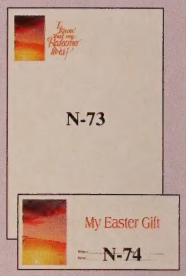


N-66 (full view 8.5x11) • **N-67** (8.5x11)
N-68 (not full view 8.5x14)

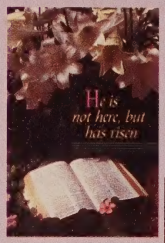




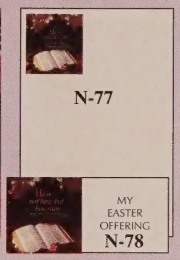
N-71 (full view 8.5x11)
N-72 (8.5x11)



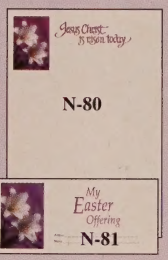
E-45 (8.5x11)



N-75 (8.5x11)
N-76 (8.5x14)

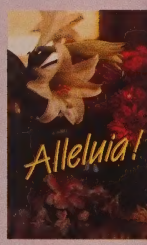


N-79 (8.5x11)

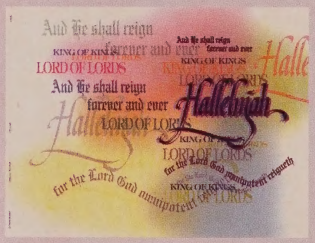


A-24 (8.5x11)
M-26 (8.5x14)

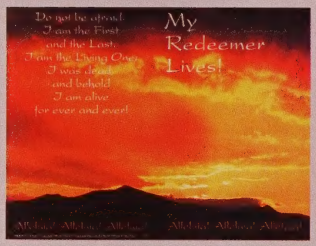
CW-Z (8.5x11)
CW-W (8.5x14)



A-90 (8.5x11)
A-91 (8.5x14)



A-62 (full view 8.5x11)
A-63 (not full view 8.5x14)



G-77 (full view 8.5x11)
G-78 (not full view 8.5x14)

B-60 (full view 8.5x11)
B-61 (not full view 8.5x14)

N-82 (8.5x11)
N-83 (8.5x14)

PENTECOST/CONFIRMATION

E-24 (8.5x11)
E-25 (8.5x14)

N-84 (8.5x11)

E-26 (8.5x11)

Cost For Bulletin Resources

8.5x11 Bulletins	**$7.75**/100, **$31**/500, **$53**/1000
8.5x14 Bulletins	**$8.50**/100, **$35**/500, **$59.50**/1000 (available where indicated)
8.5 Letterhead	**$7.75**/100, **$31**/500, **$53**/1000
Contribution Envelopes	**$6.95**/100, **$28**/500, **$50**/1000
Window Env. for Letterhead	**$5.25**/100, **$22**/500, **$39**/1000
Announcement Folders	**$7.75**/100, **$31**/500, **$53**/1000
Coin Holders	**$.34 each**/1-99, **$.32**/100-499, **$.30**/500+

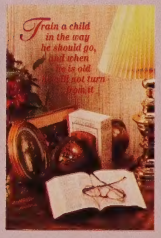
CONFIRMATION

E-48 (8.5x11)
E-49 (8.5x14)

MOTHER'S DAY

N-85 (8.5x11)
N-86 (8.5x14)

FATHER'S DAY



N-87 (8.5x11)

GRADUATION

N-88 (8.5x11)
N-89 (8.5x14)

WEDDING

N-90 (8.5x11)

FUNERAL

N-91 (8.5x11)

BARGAIN BULLETINS

Bargain Bulletins (large and regular sizes), Letterhead, and Offering Envelopes—at **$3.90** per hundred, a 45% savings. First-rate and colorful, we do not have sufficient stock to offer them as our regular bulletins. Great as extra bulletins or covers for other publications. You pick the **category**, we pick the **bulletin cover**, providing you the quantity you need. Great prices!

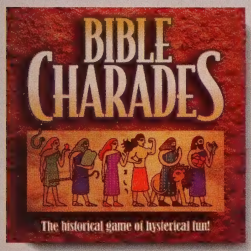
Product	*Order Code*
Lent Bulletins (8.5x11)	LB-T
Lent Fullview Bulletins (8.5x11)	LB-F
Lent Bulletins Large (8.5x14)	LB-X
Lent Letterhead	LB-L
Lent Offering Envelopes	LB-O
Palm Sun. Bulletins (8.5x11)	PB-T
Maundy Thur. Bulletins (8.5x11)	MB-T
Easter Bulletins (8.5x11)	EB-T
Easter Fullview Bulletins (8.5x11)	EB-F
Easter Bulletins Large (8.5x14)	EB-X
Easter Letterhead	EB-L
Easter Offering Envelopes	EB-O

BIBLE GAMES

Bible Charades

NEW THIS YEAR!

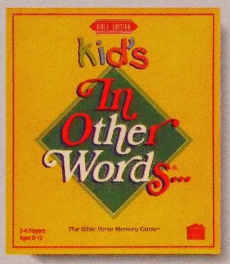
A new twist on typical Bible knowledge games that's great for parties, youth group, classroom, or family gatherings. Teams of players race around the game board by correctly guessing charades of clues in one of six categories: Old Testament Stories, New Testament Stories, People & Places, Parables, Proverbs, and Hymns & Music. Game box comes complete with 200 boxed topic cards, game board, four playing pieces, one die, 30 plastic chips, and instruction sheet. **Ages 10 & up**. Order Code: **GM-4** Cost: 1-2/**$24.99**, 3+ **$19.99**



In Other Words-Kid's Edition

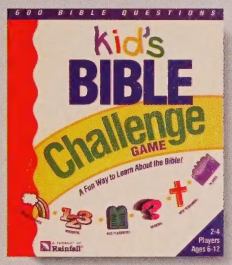
In this exciting game kids will have fun while sharpening their knowledge of the Bible. 600 different clues call for kids to decipher their meaning using synonyms. Game includes four pawns, die, game board and 100 clue cards. **Ages 6-12**. Order Code: **GM-5**. Cost: 1-2/**$15.99**, 3+/**$12.99**

NEW THIS YEAR!



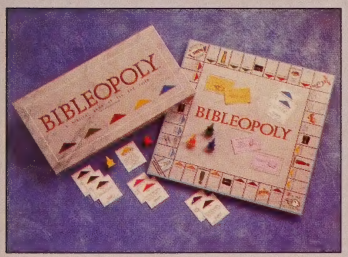
Kid's Bible Challenge

This fun trivia game teaches children about the Bible. Question categories include Old Testament, New Testament, Objects & Events, Numbers, and Places of the Bible. Game includes game board, 100 trivia cards, card holder, four pawns and die. **Ages 6-12**. Order Code: **GM-6** Cost: 1-2/**$14.99**, 3+/**$12.99**



NEW THIS YEAR!

NEW THIS YEAR!



Bibleopoly™

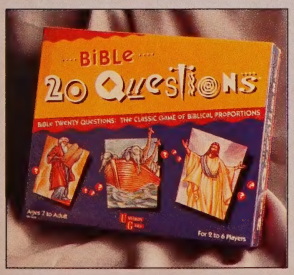
combines the fun of a board game with remarkable cities of the Bible. Once players have earned their "Cornerstone" by helping a fellow player or doing "Community Service" they make offerings in order to obtain the bricks and steeple needed to build a church building. Who will be the first person to make it to the goal? Ages 8 to adult. Order Code **GM-1**, Cost **$24.95**/1-2, **$22.95**/3-4, **$19.95**/5+

Bible Adventure Game

For Church, School, Sunday School and The Entire Family (ages 8 and up) Makes Bible Learning Fun!

• Exciting new way to learn the Scriptures • Fun for Home, Church or School • 900 Scripture-based questions and answers • Easy, Moderate and Difficult play levels

This new game is not only fun, it's a teaching tool. Spread out this full-color board, complete with playing pieces and cube, "Gifts" and "Perils" cards, and sturdy question cards and watch your family, group or class take off! Types of questions include spelling of words, true/false, multiple choice and completion. Great as a gift. Perfect as prizes. Use one in each classroom. Order code **BA-G**, Cost **$29.00**/1-2, **$26.95**/3-4, **$24.95**/5+.



Bible 20 Questions™

This is a fast-paced, fact-based game that has players identify people, places, and things from the Bible. Clues are easy enough for the beginner and challenging enough for the seasoned 20 Questions player. Ages 7 to adult. Order Code **GM-2**, Cost **$19.95**/1-2, **$17.95**/3-4, **$15.95**/5+

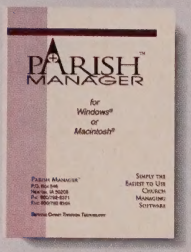
NEW THIS YEAR!

Bible Categories Game™

This is a Bible-based version of the popular category game and is fun for the whole family, youth group, or Sunday School class. Ages 12 - adult. Order Code **GM-3**, Cost **$19.95**/1-2, **$18.95**/3-4, **$17.95**/5+

NEW THIS YEAR!

CHRISTIAN COMPUTER SOFTWARE FOR CHURCH & HOME



Parish Manager

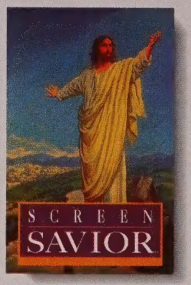
For Microsoft Windows™ or Macintosh, this is a dynamic tool that will save time in the church office by automating routine tasks. Some of the features include: prints congregational directory with the click of a button, prints mailing labels, creates personalized letters, lists parish groups and children by grades to help in ordering supplies, calendar feature, birthday and anniversary lists, free technical support for 90 days, tutorial, financial secretary's report, member contribution reports and much more. This program is designed for the user and is ideal for congregations up to 1,800 members. Order Code **MA-1** for Mac or **IB-1** for IBM-Windows; Cost : **$329.00 To order sample disk please request MA-X for Mac or IB-X for IBM-Windows™; Cost: $10.00 (coupon for $15.00 off the purchase of Parish Manager is enclosed in the sample packet). Requirements: IBM—minimum required 386/SX or greater 3MB RAM, Windows 3.0 or higher, mouse. Mac: Mac plus or higher System 6.0 requires 1MB RAM, System 7.0 2 MB RAM (4 MB recommended), System 7 recommended.**

Captain Bible in the Dome of Darkness

Captain Bible's mission is to conquer the Tower of Deception. Armed with the Word of God and the Shield of Faith he searches for hostages while overcoming the lies of the Deception Cybers by confronting their lies with God's Word. Real life applications of God's Word makes this a great learning game. Age 7 - adult. Requirements: DOS 3.3, VGA, 640K. Order Code: **IB-3**, Cost: **$39.95**

Screen Savior

This screen saver comes in three volumes. Passages from the King James Text are displayed on your screen during it's "sleep period." Vol. I topics include: Love, Charity, Salvation, Wealth and others. Vol. II is teachings of Jesus. Vol. III includes 15 full-color Biblical images with poetic scripture from the NIV. Requirements: IBM—IBM or compatible computer and Windows 3.1™ or later. MAC—Mac 512KE or newer and After Dark 2.0 or later or Dark Side™ Screen Saver.



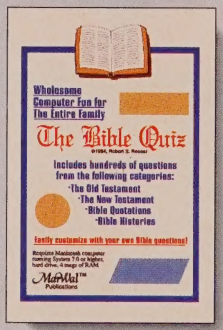
Volume	Mac	IBM	Cost
Vol. I	MA-8	IB-8	$19.95
Vol. II	MA-9	IB-9	$19.95
Vol. III	MA-A	IB-A	$19.95

Art of the Word

This Clip Art package includes 300 Christian symbols and pictures to help dress-up your newsletters and bulletins. Requirements: IBM or compatible or Macintosh with 640K RAM, graphic capabilities and printer. Order Code: **MA-B** for Mac and **IB-B** for IBM; Cost: **$39.95**

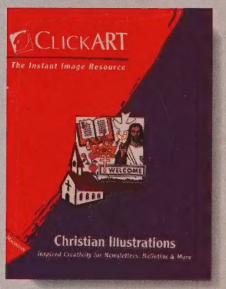
The Bible Quiz™

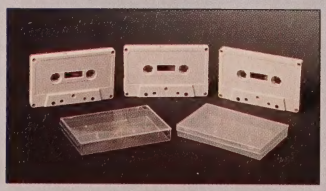
Four pre-written categories are included: The Old Testament, The New Testament, Bible Quotations, and Bible Histories. Two other categories are available for customization. Each category holds 50 questions with 4 choices for answers. Great for home, school or confirmation. You can design tests for students. Names and scores can be saved for grading purposes. Requirements: Macintosh computer running System 7.0 or higher, hard drive, 4MB RAM. Order Code **MA-2**; Cost **$29.95**



Religious ClickArt

This clip art bundle includes over 500 images. Included in this package are 4 titles from ClickArt: Christian Illustrations, Church Bulletins & Newsletters, Sunday School & Bible Studies, and Christian Holidays. ClickArt images work with virtually every Macintosh and Windows application that handles graphics. You can easily convert images from one format to another—so your images keep working, even when you change applications. Order Code: **IB-7** for IBM and **MA-7** for MAC; Cost: **$69.95**





COMMCHOICE™ cassettes are made for high speed duplicators and can be used as an inexpensive master tape! Creative Communications has been using these tapes for 2 years with great success. We are ready to offer them to you for your duplicating needs. The cassette housing features 5-screw construction, steel pins and nylon rollers. This high-grade tape is great for reducing head wear on your machines. Shells are in white only.

SOFT POLY BOXES

For better protection from dust and harmful elements, you can use these soft poly boxes to ship or store your cassettes. Poly boxes come in both opaque and clear plastic.

CASSETTE LABELS

Label your recordings with laser compatible cassette labels. Labels come 12 labels per sheet (white only). Order by sheets. For custom imprinted sheets please call for order form and imprint information.

BLANK AUDIO CASSETTES

LOOK AT THESE PRICES! AND YOU CAN ORDER ANY QUANTITY YOU WANT!

minutes	minutes per side	1-99	100-499	500-999	1000+	Order Code
32	16	.40	.39	.34	.32	**NT-A**
62	31	.43	.42	.37	.35	**NT-B**
92	46	.50	.49	.43	.41	**NT-C**
Opaque Box		.14	.13	.10	.09	**NT-D**
Clear Box		.17	.15	.13	.11	**NT-E**
12 Labels		.17	.15	.14	.12	**NT-F**

NEW THIS YEAR!

THE GREAT BIBLE DISCOVERY SERIES

A New Video Series, A New Approach!

Easter: Discovering The Empty Tomb Extra-length edition!

Discovering The Empty Tomb. The first episode of the Great Bible Discovery Series follows Jesus from his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to his glorious resurrection on Easter morning. Along the way the live action "guide" keeps things on track by explaining the Gospel in a fresh, entertaining way. Original artwork beautifully portrays the drama of Christ's Passion and the earth-shaking excitement of his resurrection. In the end, children will discover the empty tomb and the answer to God's promise found there. Join the discovery team with this first, extra-length, edition of the Great Bible Discovery Series: Discovering The Empty Tomb.
(Approx. 40 min., VHS) Code **Y-31** Cost: **$14.95**

Learning the Bible becomes an exciting adventure with the Great Bible Discovery Series. Favorite characters and narratives come alive through dissolve animation and a straightforward translation of Scripture. Follow the live action "guide" as he leads the way through each story by providing clues, asking questions, offering commentary which help viewers reach the goal of each episode and understand the Bible more clearly. Designed as a documentary for young Christians, the Great Bible Discovery Series is a wonderful **learning tool** for home or classroom.

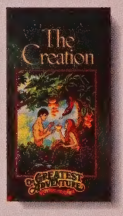
Here is what makes the Great Bible Discovery Series different—and the best Bible video for young people: the lively interactive approach . . . the questions the narrator asks . . . the final interactive quiz that serves as **a learning device**. You'll want the whole series as they become available.
Future Episodes: *The Great Missionary Journeys of Paul, Abraham: A Saga of Faith,* and *Joseph and His Brothers.*

SEE THESE SPECIAL BARGAINS ON 'THE EASTER STORY' AND 'EASTER IS'!

Special! Just $5.95 with purchase of any other video!
The Easter Story Special **LA-X • Easter Is** Special **LT-X**

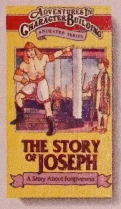
The Easter Story, by Hanna-Barbera, traces the events surrounding Jesus' resurrection beginning with his entry into Jerusalem. (30 min., VHS) Code **V-73** Cost:**$9.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Easter Is. Frustrated by a school project, Benji is mean to his dog who runs away. Benji learns a valuable lesson about the meaning of Easter. (25 min., VHS) Code **V-34** Cost: **$12.95** ***3 bonus pts.!***



Creation is part of the highly acclaimed Hanna-Barbera *Greatest Adventure* series of animated Bible stories. This video traces the story of God's creation of the world. (30 min., VHS) Code **V-79** Cost: **$9.95** ***3 bonus points!***

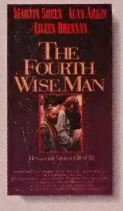
Noah's Ark, one of the greatest adventures of all time springs to life under the narration of James Earl Jones. For ages 3 to 11, this video is based on the award-winning book by Peter Spier. (27 min., VHS) Code **Q-73** Cost:**$14.99** ***3 bonus points!***



Betrayed by his brothers, **Joseph** is sold into slavery and taken to Egypt, far from home. Part of the *Adventures in Character Building* series, this video teaches about love and forgiveness. (25 min., VHS) Code **U-40** Cost: **$14.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Good Samaritan is from the entertaining and fully animated *Adventures in Character Building* series, this video tells children the unforgettable story of the true meaning of helping others. (25 min., VHS) Code **U-39** Cost:**$14.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Magic Boy's Easter. A boy with a bone disease, dreams of Jesus' healings. Upon awakening, he consents to surgery, knowing Jesus will never leave him. (24 min., VHS) Code **V-35** Cost: **$14.95** ***3 bonus points!***



The Fourth Wise Man is the gently comic fictional story of a Magi named Artaban played by Martin Sheen. Artaban searches 33 years for Jesus, finally meeting the **Messiah on Easter morning**. (72 min., VHS) Code **U-29** Cost: **$14.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Three Days is a moving dramatization of what Jesus' disciples might have gone through during those bleak three days between the crucifixion and the resurrection. (30 min., VHS) Code **V-37** Cost: **$14.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Easter Today, Easter Forever. Nanny and Isaiah come to experience "Little Easters" through Christ's resurrection. (33 min., VHS) Order Code **V-33** Cost: **$12.95** ***3 bonus points!***

NOW GET THE ENTIRE SET OF 'CHILDREN'S HEROES' ABSOLUTELY FREE!

Here's How the 'Bonus Points' Plan Will Work:

Receive **bonus points** for every video you purchase from Creative Communications for the Parish. For every 10 bonus points earned, you can pick out **free** one of the 13 episodes of "Children's Heroes of the Bible." *Please note: bonus points must be used at time of purchase; they do not carry over to future orders.*

Purchase additional "Children's Heroes" episodes at discounts, or receive the entire set **free** through the bonus point system. When you place your video order, the order taker will tell you how many bonus points you have earned. Simply select a free tape for every 10 points, and it will be included in your order.

Special Discounts on 'Children's Heroes of the Bible' Series

This low-cost 13-volume series is a wonderful way to introduce children to the great people, events, teachings and stories of the Old and New Testaments. Children love to watch these Biblically based stories again and again. (approx. 23 min.)
Cost **$7.95 each**

OLD TESTAMENT

The Story of Joseph Order Code **S-39**
The Story of Moses Order Code **S-40**
The Story of David Order Code **S-41**
The Story of Elijah Order Code **S-42**
The Story of Jeremiah Code **S-43**
The Story of Esther Order Code **S-44**

NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus' Death and Resurrection Code **S-8L***
Jesus' Birth and Youth Order Code **S-5L***
Jesus Teaches and Calls Disciples Code **S-33**
Jesus Heals and Works Miracles Code **S-34**
Jesus' Struggles and Opponents Code **S-35**
Apostles and the Early Church Code **S-37**
Paul's Ministry and Trials Order Code **S-38**

**Special Price* **$5.95*

Buy Any Three for $19.95 Code S-56
Buy Entire Series, for $79.95 Code S-55

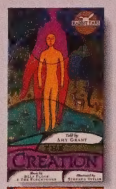
RABBIT EARS VIDEO PRESENTS THE GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD

Narrated by Hollywood actors, with original soundtracks by leading musicians and the finest illustrations, these videos reintroduce classic tales from the Bible. Rabbit Ears Production's innovative dissolve animation technique will entertain and educate the entire family. (30 min., VHS) Cost: **$14.98 each** *3 bonus points!*

21 Parents' Choice Awards! 2 Grammy Awards! 7 Action for Children's Television Awards!

Order Any Three "Greatest Stories" for $39.95 Order Code Y-28 5 bonus points!

The Creation. Singer Amy Grant recounts the wondrous story of how God created the universe and gave life to Adam and Eve. Music by jazz trio Béla Fleck and the Flecktones captures the simple poetry of this timeless narrative. Code **Y-20**



The Savior Is Born. Academy Award nominee Morgan Freeman delivers a poignant retelling of the first Christmas according to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Code **Y-27**

David And Goliath. Mel Gibson tells how David miraculously defeats the Philistine giant Goliath. Music by Branford Marsalis. Code **Y-21**

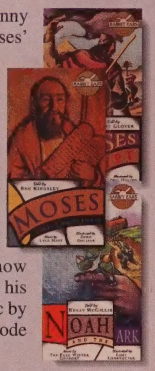
Jonah And The Whale. Jason Robards tells this compelling adventure story of forgiveness and obedience. Code **Y-22**

Joseph And His Brothers. Actor Rubén Blades relates the matchless story of betrayal and forgiveness. Music by Strunz and Farah. Code **Y-23**

Moses In Egypt. Actor Danny Glover tells the story of Moses' call from God. Joyous music by The Sounds of Blackness. Code **Y-24**

Moses The Lawgiver. Oscar winner Ben Kingsley tells the story of how Moses received the Ten Commandments. Code **Y-25**

Noah And The Ark. Kelly McGillis lovingly tells how Noah built an ark to save his family from the flood. Music by The Paul Winter Consort. Code **Y-26**



STORIES WITH BIBLICAL VALUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

NEW THIS YEAR!

Dravecky: A Story of Courage and Grace. Faith in God sustained big league pitcher Dave Dravecky throughout his fight with cancer. A unique message of hope. (60 min., VHS) Code **Y-41** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

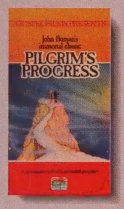
Legend Of The Desert Bigfoot. Last Chance Detectives want to solve a puzzle, but learn that things are not always what they seem. (50 min., VHS) Order Code **R-99** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus pts.!*

Films from Focus on the Family!

Mystery Lights of Navajo Mesa. At the edge of a small desert town, a mystery unfolds, and, kids learn about the Biblical principle of forgiveness. (50 min., VHS) Code **R-50** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus pts.!*

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is an Emmy award-winning animated version of C.S. Lewis' allegory. With a study guide. (95 min., VHS) Code **V-76** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*

Pilgrim's Progress, a spectacularly colorful version of John Bunyan's classic tale of the Christian journey, has a powerful impact. (95 min., VHS) Code **V-75** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*



3 OLD TESTAMENT CLASSICS FROM TURNER PICTURES!

NEW THIS YEAR! *3 bonus points each!*

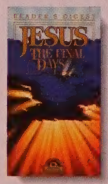
Abraham tells the dramatic tale of an ordinary shepherd who is called upon by God to show his abiding faith in extraordinary ways. Starring Richard Harris and Barbara Hershey, this film is a journey of faith with Abraham and Sarah. (150 min., VHS) Code **Y-45** Cost: **$19.95**

Jacob features Matthew Modine and Lara Flynn Boyle as Jacob and Rachel. After tricking his older brother out of his birthright, Jacob must work years for his uncle Laban before he can win his love. (94 min., VHS) Code **Y-46** Cost: **$19.95**

Joseph is an epic tale of God's faithfulness and one man's forgiveness. Academy Award-winner Ben Kingsley plays the part of the wealthy landowner to whom Joseph (Paul Mercurio) is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. (2 tapes, 185 min., VHS) Code **Y-47** Cost: **$19.95**

JESUS AND HIS TIMES

$14.95 each *3 bonus points each!*



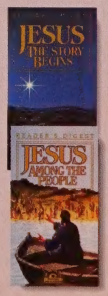
Based on the Gospel of Luke, this three-part series takes viewers back in time to key moments in Jesus' life.

Jesus: The Final Days. Join Jesus at the Last Supper. Witness His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, His trial before Pontius Pilate. Despair with his followers at the crucifixion and rejoice at the events that followed. (55 min., VHS) Order Code **U-89**

Also Available:

Jesus: The Story Begins. Travel with Joseph and Mary as they make their way to Bethlehem. (61 min., VHS) Code **U-87**

Jesus: Among The People. Watch Jesus teaching in the synagogues of Galilee. (57 min., VHS) Order Code **U-88**



Order All 3 for $39.95 Code U-90 10 bonus points!

Great Videos for Teens!

NEW THIS YEAR!

The Judas Project. Features high-tech special effects and moving music in the **dramatic retelling of the story of Christ** in a modern setting. (PG-13, 98 min., VHS) Code **Y-43** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

NEW THIS YEAR!

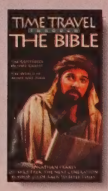
Alone in the Dark. This hard-hitting drama illustrates the devastating **consequences of drinking and driving**. Encourages kids to examine peer pressure from a biblical perspective. (27 min., VHS) Code **Y-44** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

Great for Young People of All Ages!

NEW THIS YEAR!

God's Story: From Creation to Eternity. Scripture, the talents of actor Dean Jones and the imagination of a Disney illustrator combine in this audio-visual journey through the Bible. (70 min., VHS) Code **Y-42** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

Time Travel Through The Bible. Jonathan Frakes of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" stars in this "time machine" journey through the Old and New Testaments. (107 min., VHS) Code **Q-54** Cost: **$24.95** *4 bonus points!*



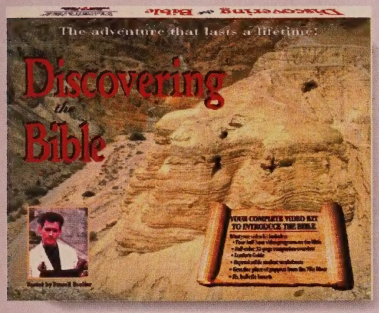
DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

NEW THIS YEAR!

The Adventure that Lasts a Lifetime!

This four-part series is intended as a basic introduction to the Bible for those who have loved the Bible for years but may not have had the opportunity to discover where the Bible came from and how it came down to us. The flexible curriculum can be adapted to a four- or eight-week study program.

Order Code Y-48 Cost: $79.95
10 bonus points!



The four programs:

1. Getting Acquainted looks at the continuing influence of the Bible, how it came to be written and how it is organized.

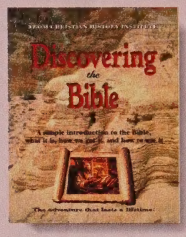
2. The Old Testament explores the main themes of the Old Testament, its organization and how it has been accurately copied.

3. The New Testament looks at the relationship between the New and Old Testaments and how the New Testament Canon came to be.

4. Survival, Spread and Influence notes how the Bible has survived through repeated persecutions and offers examples of how the Bible has transformed individual lives.

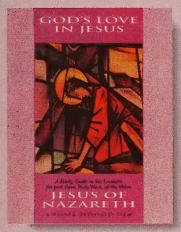
The complete curriculum kit includes:

- Four half-hour programs
- Full-color 32-page companion overview
- Leader's Guide
- Reproducible student worksheets
- Genuine piece of papyrus from the Nile River
- Six bulletin inserts



JESUS OF NAZARETH IN TWO FORMATS— BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM AND WORSHIP SERVICES

Bible Study



• **God's Love In Jesus of Nazareth** is a **6-part Lenten Bible study.** Included is a detailed Leader's Guide (paper, 40 pgs.), and 12 copies of student work sheets for each session. 25 minutes of video provide an integral part of each session in this exciting series. From Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his glorious resurrection, the video drama and genuine Bible study provide an ideal Lenten growth opportunity. Code **JV-3** Cost **$19.95.**

SAVE WITH A SPECIAL COMBINATION!

• **God's Love In Jesus of Nazareth Leader's Guide**, 12 copies of each session study questions for participants plus complete 3-cassette *Jesus of Nazareth* video. Code **JV-5** Cost: **$59.95**

Lenten Worship Services

• **Six Lenten Worship Services** built around 25-minute episodes from *Jesus of Nazareth* use the video as the sermon. Colorful worship folders provide complete services with responsive readings, prayers, hymns and a Gospel lesson suited for each service. Perfect for a gathering at church or in the home. Each order includes free worship leader's notes. **Pre-printed bulletins** in sets of 50 for each of 6 session. Code **JV-P** Cost: **$29**; 100 for each of 6 sessions, **$48.**

Note: Churches which already have ***Jesus of Nazareth*** *need order only the study or worship materials.*

Jesus of Nazareth is a highly acclaimed film portrayal of the life of Christ by director Franco Zeffirelli. (3 VHS tapes, 371 min.) Code **V-45** Cost: **$49.95** ***10 bonus points!***

JESUS: LEGEND OR LORD?

NEW THIS YEAR!

Jesus: Legend or Lord is an exciting journey back to the first century that gives viewers a glimpse of the world that Jesus saw as he moved toward the cross. Internationally known historian and best-selling author Dr. Paul Maier presents a provocative eight-session series using history, archeology and geography. Package includes a reproducible study guide for Bible study, small group ministry or community outreach. Each session is 20-25 minutes. (Approx. 180 min., 2 VHS tapes) Order Code **R-90** Cost **$79.99** ***10 bonus points!***

JESUS THEN AND NOW

New Low Price!

Jesus Christ—carpenter from Nazareth, leader of disciples, victim of a plot that led to his crucifixion, reported alive again three days later. Who was this man? What makes people follow him today? This **12-part video** series seeks to answer some of these questions. Each program is 20 minutes long. Complete series comes with two tapes, and a 28-page study/leader's guide. (240 min., VHS) Code **V-39** Cost: **$29.95** ***5 bonus points!***

Special Lenten Edition!

6 programs from the *Jesus Then and Now* Series: Temptation, Prayer, The Man, Opposition, Crucifixion and Resurrection. **Package includes:** one tape, Study / Leader's guide. Code **Q-16** Cost: **$24.95** ***4 bonus pts.!***

THE TRIAL & TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The first three centuries were decisive for Christianity. The very existence of the Church was threatened by powerful opponents out to destroy it. These **6 half-hour video programs** answer the question, "How did the Early Church survive and spread?" These programs go to the locations and use dramatic re-creations to bring you close to these early believers. The following topics are covered: **Foundations:** What happened to the 12 apostles? **Spread:** The Word was for all. How did they bring their message to the world? **Accusation:** Believers were subject to many charges, some outrageously false and others true. **Persecution:** The mightiest empire in history outlawed and persecuted them. Why? **Testimony:** A close-up look at heroes who paid with their lives rather than deny their faith. **Transition:** Constantine granted the Church legality and favor. Was this a bane or a blessing? Why did the Church succeed?

The complete package includes:

- 6- or 12-part curriculum
- full-color companion booklet
- film scripts
- leader's guide
- reproducible student worksheets

Order Code **S-76** Cost: **$99.95!** ***12 bonus points!***

Small Group or Large, Lent is the Ideal Time for Bible Study!

YESHUA

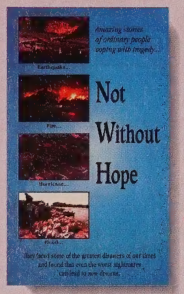
"Yeshua," the Hebrew name for Jesus, offers a fascinating new view of Jesus' life. This five-hour miniseries filmed on location in the Holy Land reveals ancient customs with a clarity not afforded by most historical treatments. Each tape comes with its own discussion guide. Complete 5-tape series. Order Code **Q-85** Cost: **$119.95** ***15 bonus points!***
Each tape ordered separately, **$24.95**. ***4 bonus points each!***

Tape 1: **The Land and the Promise** begins in Ur of the Chaldees, the birthplace of Abraham, and ends with the Hebrews' return to a homeland soon taken over by Rome. **Q-80**
Tape 2: **The Promise Takes Root** begins with the angel's visit to Mary and proceeds through the presentation of Jesus in the temple. **Q-81**
Tape 3: **Voice and the Light** tells of the zealous Jewish community at Qumran where John, orphaned as a child, may have grown up. This tape details Jesus' early ministry. **Q-82**
Tape 4: **The Bread of Sacrifice** shows how Jesus prepared his followers for his coming Passion. This segment ends with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. **Q-83**
Tape 5: **Ripples of Darkness, Waves of Light** includes dramatic reenactments of the torture, execution, burial and resurrection of Jesus and an inquiry into the Shroud of Turin. **Q-84**

WHERE JESUS WALKED

This video takes you to Jerusalem, Nazareth, the Garden of Gethsemane, the River Jordan, Calvary and more. Breathtaking photography and dramatic background music will leave a lasting impression on those who make this video visit to the Holy Land. (30 min., VHS) Code **U-56** Cost: **$14.95** ***3 bonus points***

NOT WITHOUT HOPE



Not Without Hope picks up after tragic events fade from the public eye…tragedies like the death of two family members in one month, the great midwest flood, and the Los Angeles earthquake. People must pick up their broken lives and Christians can play a vital role. See the church in action as never before…assisting in the recovery and witnessing to the Gospel. **Not Without Hope** is inspirational…ideal for viewing by any Christian group. (45 min., VHS) Order Code **R-52** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Study version, designed for a six-week Bible study, includes a specially edited tape for use with a **study guide** with reproducible study sheets. Code **R-61** Cost: **$29.95** ***4 bonus points!***

JESUS: WHO DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?

NEW THIS YEAR!

At this hour millions would die for Him! Why? Who is this unforgettable man called Jesus? This intriguing investigation with everyday people and leading Bible scholars reveals some refreshing and often startling answers. Here is an intelligent, thought-provoking portrait that will challenge viewers. Produced by award-winning Horizons Television, this program raises key questions and helps viewers reach their own conclusion. (56 min., VHS) Order Code **Y-49** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points***

Passion In Jerusalem: The Easter Story

The story of Easter and the great events which led to the crucifixion and resurrection. The passion and the joy. Filmed on location in all the traditional locations associated with Holy Week. (30 min., VHS) Code **R-67** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Last Supper

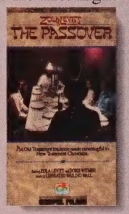
NEW THIS YEAR!

Filmed in the Holy Land, this film explores the traditional Jewish Passover "Seder" meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. Emphasizes both the Jewish roots and Christian significance of the Last Supper. (60 min., VHS) Code **Y-54** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Garden Tomb: A Special Place

The resurrection is highlighted in this video. Pilgrims to Jerusalem have found this location, perhaps Christ's own tomb, to be a very special place. Ideal Easter morning viewing for Bible groups! (30 min., VHS) Code **V-41** Cost: **$14.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Passover



You are welcomed into a Jewish home for the festival meal celebrated on the first night of Passover. A surprise ending reveals the significance of the meal's symbols and the true Messiah to whom these symbols point. (30 min., VHS) Code **V-40** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Christ In Art: The Old Masters

This documentary surveys the most moving images of Christ—from Leonardo da Vinci to Rembrandt and others. The video is divided into three 15-minute programs. (45 min., VHS) Code **V-42** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Messiah

Renowned conductor Roger Norrington leads an authentic performance of Handel's *Messiah*, one of the best-loved of all oratorios, for the Cardiff Festival of Choirs in Wales. This superb performance is a moving experience of faith and joy. (113 min., VHS) Order Code **R-29** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Young Messiah Live

NEW THIS YEAR!

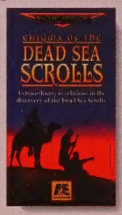
Handel's *Messiah* like you've never heard—or seen—before! This modern interpretation captures the excitement and wonder of the premier performance of this sold-out musical. With Sandi Patti, Steven Curtis Chapman and Steve Green. (65 min., VHS) Code **Y-55** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

In the Company of Angels

NEW THIS YEAR!

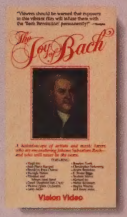
Explore the world of angels with leading theologians and scholars in an insightful program. Hear how science and philosophy explain the angels' existence. Enjoy uplifting music and art in a message of God's love. (55 min., VHS) Code **Y-30** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Enigma of the Dead Sea Scrolls

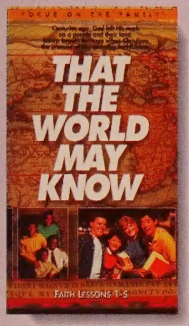


High-tech analysis and in-depth scholarship combine to shed light on the oldest known manuscripts from New Testament times. Study of these unique Scrolls offer insights into the birth of Christianity. (50 min., VHS) Order Code **R-68** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Joy of Bach



Recapture the greatness and excitement of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach in this assortment of contemporary performances of his music, interspersed with biographical and historical sketches. (60 min., VHS)
Order Code **V-17**
Cost: **$19.95**
3 bonus points!



New from 'Focus on the Family'

THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW

NEW THIS YEAR!

Israel. Never has one land's legacy been so relevant to Christians. And never has a video series so vividly captured Israel's heritage—until now. Two years in the making, **That the World May Know** transports viewers to the lands of the Old and New Testaments to explore the fascinating geographical and cultural backdrop for scriptural events and personalities. Host Raynard Vander Laan, a teacher and historian, connects the historical context with the significance for believers in five "faith lessons." An intriguing program of study and inspiration.

Tape 1 (approx. 60 min.)
Faith Lesson 1: Standing at the Crossroads—Tel Gezer
Faith Lesson 2: Wet Feet—The Jordan River
Faith Lesson 3: First Fruits—Tel Jericho
Tape 2 (approx. 50 min.)
Faith Lesson 4: Confronting Evil—Tel Beth Shemesh
Faith Lesson 5: Iron of Culture—Tel Azakah
Includes Discussion Guide for all the Faith Lessons
(2 tapes, approx. 110 min., VHS)
Order Code **Y-51** Cost: **$34.95** ***5 bonus points!***

EPIC VIDEOS WITH BIBLICAL THEMES FOR HOME AND CHURCH LIBRARY

A.D. The Book of Acts comes alive in this 3-tape epic covering the years 30-69 A.D. Comes with a Study Guide for a 12-session course. An all-star cast makes this great entertainment. (360 min., VHS) Code **V-46** Cost: **$99.95** ***12 bonus points!***

The Ten Commandments Cecil B. DeMille's classic version of *The Ten Commandments* tells the story of Moses (Charlton Heston) and the Hebrew exodus. (2 tapes, 219 min., VHS) Code **Q-10** Cost: **$29.95** ***4 bonus points!***

King of Kings From Christ's birth in a manger to the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, *King of Kings* brings the life of Christ to the screen with taste and reverence. (170 min., VHS) Code **Q-86** Cost: **$29.95** ***4 bonus points!***

The Greatest Story Ever Told Internationally-acclaimed actor Max Von Sydow's stirring performance reveals the compassion, anguish and glory of Jesus Christ. (2 tapes, 199 min., VHS) Code **Q-91** Cost: **$29.95** ***4 bonus points!***

Ben-Hur Ben-Hur, a peace-loving prince of Judea, leads his nation against the conquering Romans. Charlton Heston's portrayal brings to life a legendary hero. (211 min., VHS) Code **Q-21** Cost: **$29.95.** ***4 bonus points!***

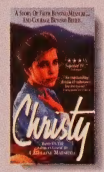
FUN FAMILY VIEWING—VIDEOS WITH VALUES!

NEW THIS YEAR!

A Man Called Peter. The compelling story of Peter Marshall, Scottish-born minister who rose to become the chaplain of the U.S. Senate and inspired many to seek the God he was so close to. (117 min., VHS) Code **Y-52** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

NEW THIS YEAR!

Shadowlands (1993 Version). Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger star in the story of how Christian writer and scholar C.S. Lewis faces the death of his wife from cancer and struggles to find peace. (133 min., VHS) Code **Y-50** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

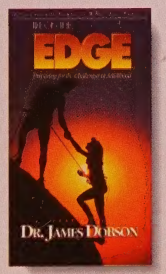


Christy. Based on the Catherine Marshall best-seller, this movie touched the hearts of young and old. Spirited Christy Huddleston leaves her comfortable city home to teach school in the Tennessee backwoods. (80 min., VHS) Code **R-59** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

The Intruder. This drama for ages 8-12 features the Bartons, a respectable and committed Christian family living a comfortable existence—until cousin Kevin comes to live with them and test their patience. (58 min., VHS) Code **R-51** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

Chariots Of Fire. This inspiring film tells the story of two champion Olympic runners in 1927, Eric Liddell and Harold Jacobs. Liddell, a devout Christian, places his relationship with God above athletics. (360 min., VHS) Code **Q-74** Cost: **$19.95** ***3 bonus points!***

LIFE ON THE EDGE: PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGES OF ADULTHOOD



Each tape in the series, $19.95, 3 bonus points!
Entire series only $99.95, Code R-26 12 bonus pts.!

Whether a young person is selecting a career or choosing a mate, the decisions that are made in these crucial transition years will shape his or her future. This series tackles misguided thinking about respect, love, safe sex, God's will, emotions and lifestyle choices. **Dr. James Dobson** of *Focus on the Family* speaks to young people candidly and with respect for their dreams, fears, and freedom to make choices.

Session 1: Finding God's Will For Your Life. Dr. Dobson shows teens how to balance responsibility and freedom, and make decisions within the will of God. (52 min., VHS) Code **R-19**

Session 2: The Myth Of Safe Sex. Dr. Dobson tackles the myths and misinformation that our society feeds young people. (52 min., VHS) Code **R-20**

Session 3: Love Must Be Tough. Genuine love must be tough to survive the stresses of today's world. This view helps teens build healthy relationships on mutual respect, confidence and courage. (53 min., VHS) Code **R-21**

Session 4: The Keys To A Lifelong Love. In a society of dissolving commitment and fidelity, Dr. Dobson shows adolescents how to defy the odds and build lasting, satisfying relationships. (51 min., VHS) Code **R-22**

Session 5: Emotions: Can You Trust Them? Though emotional ups and downs are a part of living, they don't have to dominate life. Dr. Dobson offers keys for handling emotions. (39 min., VHS) Code **R-23**

Session 6: When God Doesn't Make Sense. It's easy to believe that life will be carefree and happy, but everyone experiences difficulties that are not easy to understand. Dr. Dobson offers insights on how to cope with life's trials from his book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. (49 min., VHS) Code **R-24**

Session 7: Pornography: Addictive, Progressive and Deadly. This frank talk about the temptation, addiction and perversion of pornography emboldens young people to resist its influence. Includes segments from Dr. Dobson's interview with serial killer Ted Bundy. (47 min., VHS) Code **R-25**

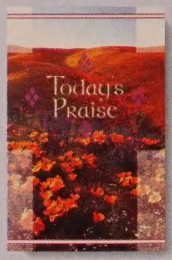
Special Curriculum Package!
Get all seven sessions of **Life On The Edge** on **four tapes**, plus a leader's guide with group activities and discussion questions, and Dr. Dobson's book *Parenting Is Not For Cowards*—all housed in a sturdy case. Code **R-64** Cost: regularly $139.95 **only $119.95** ***12 bonus points!***

For Discounts on Christian Video, Look to Creative Communications for the Parish

SPECIAL WORSHIP RESOURCES

Today's Praise

CONTEMPORARY LITURGY USING TRADITIONAL MELODIES



In keeping with the tradition—begun by Martin Luther and encouraged by many current worship books—of setting various portions of the liturgy to hymn tunes for the sake of variety and deeper understanding, **Today's Praise** offers seven such liturgical hymns employing classic melodies: • **Kyrie** to *Ebenezer* or *Hyfrydol* • **Gloria** to *Regent Square* • **Alleluia** to *Wie schoen leuchtet* • **Creed** to *Wachet auf* • **Sanctus** to *Nicea* • **Agnus Dei** to *Eventide* • **Thanksgiving** to *Sine Nomine.* A booklet containing all the music accompanies each order of 50 or more. The attractive worship folder may be used again and again, and parishioners will appreciate not having to learn "unfamiliar new chants" to sing their accustomed praises. Order Code **TP-1**. Cost **$9.90**/100, **$40**/500. Min. order of 50.

In God We Trust

A SERVICE FOR A NATIONAL HOLIDAY

If the hymn *My Faith Looks Up to Thee* were sung to the melody of *My Country 'Tis of Thee,* it could have fascinating overtones, placing one's personal faith and commitment into the context of a wider society. That is one of the suggestions offered in this order of service which is appropriate for national observances like Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day. A responsive litany with lines of *Oh Worship the King* begins the service; stanzas of the *Battle Hymn of the Replublic* serve as the Alleluia verse, and a newly written closing uses the beloved melody of the *Navy Hymn.* Choose your own scriptures, prayers, and homily to let this service give meaning to our national motto for your congregation. Order Code **PT-3**, Cost: **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200

NEW THIS YEAR!

Returning to the Shepherd's Fold

A GRAVESIDE COMMITAL SERVICE

Unlike a ceremony in which the mourners merely listen, this simple yet meaningful service allows those who have gathered at the graveside to participate actively in a responsive litany of Scripture and prayer. The rich Biblical imagery of the Good Shepherd, who calls his own by name, makes this attractive leaflet something to take home and treasure even beyond the cemetery. The inspiring words of the 23rd Psalm, as well as the verses of the hymn *I Am Jesus Little Lamb* are included for private meditation, making **Returning to the Shepherd's Fold** a resource for ongoing ministry to the grieving. Order Code **CS-1** Cost: 50/**$4.50**, 100/**$7**, 200/**$12**.

Pew Envelopes

NEW THIS YEAR!

• Convenient for Members & Visitors • Can Increase Your Offerings • Colorful • Economical

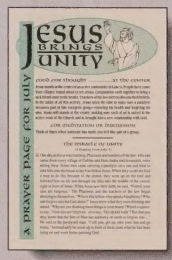
Here is a idea that works to increase your church's offerings. Pew envelopes put within arm's reach provide a convenient way to contribute. *Visitors* can use them for their offering while informing you of their name, address, and their desire for a visit. *Members* can use them for special gifts–or for offerings if they forget their regular envelopes. Available with a choice of two designs.

$9.00/100, **$17.00**/500, **$33.00**/1000.

PE-A **PE-B**

1996 PRAYER PAGES

A Fresh Way to Open Parish Meetings



These monthly Prayer Pages for 1996 highlight twelve of the miracles of Jesus. With the accounts of each miracle as a backdrop, these devotions expand on the themes touched on in the Gospel readings. Printed on 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" sheets, these devotions include responsive litanies, prayers, Psalms, and hymns. Handy to use at parish meetings, small-group Bible studies, or family gatherings. Prayer Pages cost: **$5**/50 per month, please order in 50s. Save money, order **Prayer Pages** for 1996, **all twelve months**, 50 sheets per month cost: **$39**, 100 sheets, **$69,** Order Code **Y-13**.

1996 Prayer Pages "The Miracles of Jesus"

Jan.	Jesus Brings Sight **YY-1**
Feb.	Jesus Brings Silence **YY-2**
Mar.	Jesus Brings Life **YY-3**
Apr.	Jesus Brings Salvation **YY-4**
May	Jesus Brings Cleansing **YY-5**
Jun.	Jesus Brings Joy **YY-6**
Jul.	Jesus Brings Unity **YY-7**
Aug.	Jesus Brings Faith **YY-8**
Sep.	Jesus Brings Vigor **YY-9**
Oct.	Jesus Brings Hearing **Y-10**
Nov.	Jesus Brings Nourishment **Y-11**
Dec.	Jesus Brings The Kingdom **Y-12**

ALL GOD'S PEOPLE SING!

A Songbook for the Whole Year

A new book of songs and much more! Over 200 hymns, spirituals and carols for children (grades 3-8), youth and adults, including modern and traditional ethnic and folk hymns, plus easy liturgies for Advent, Lent, etc. and special occasions. Also has the Apostles' Creed, Luther's *Small Catechism*, and prayers for a variety of occasions. Even includes indexes of the hymns by Scripture text, first line and those in canon form. For Sunday Schools, day schools, song leaders, pastors, church musicians and parents. A perfect *supplement* to TLH, LW and LBW. **Hardbound**, 316 pages, 6x9" size. Order Code **GP-S** Cost: **$7.95**/1-50; **$6.95**/50+ **Pastor's sample copy** (one only, please)—Order Code **GP-X** Cost: **$5.95.**
Accompaniment book, spiral bound, duplicates the hardbound book in a large, double-page, (12x9") soft cover format. Order Code **GP-A** Cost: **$22.95.**

HYMNAL SUPPLEMENT

This worship resource for Lutheran parishes contains many hymns and songs of the Church written in the last 15 years, as well as classic resources to enlarge and enrich the parish repertory. Contains 140 hymns, psalms, and liturgical settings, including alternative, contemporary communion liturgies (one by Marty Haugen and another in a newly-revised and expanded form from Pacific Lutheran University). The Hymnal Supplement 1991 is designed to complement **LBW** and **LW**. For Pew Edition with soft cover, Order Code **HS-9**, Cost **$4.95** each. For spiral bound accompaniment edition, Order Code **HS-0**, Cost **$18.95** each.

GLIMPSES – A BULLETIN INSERT SERIES OF CHURCH HISTORY

Broaden the vision of your members with *Glimpses* into the "people, events, life and faith from the Church across the ages" by subscribing to these inexpensive monthly bulletin inserts. Prepared by the *Christian History Institute*, these half-sheets put into concise, lay terms fascinating knowledge of church history. Six inserts are shipped twice a year along with *Pastor's Notes*, a companion publication for the pastor with additional details and sermon ideas to make fullest use of each insert. Subscriptions are ongoing, billed with each shipment. Cancel at any time.

One year subscription to *Glimpses* includes 12 monthly issues, shipped in groups of 6 twice a year; begins with January 1996. Order Code **GS-S** Cost: 50 of each of six inserts/**$15**; 100 or each/**$28**; 250 of each/**$60**. Plus shipping. (Your second group of six inserts for 1996 will be shipped in June 1996.)

GLIMPSES FOR 1996 FOCUSES ON TWO FASCINATING AREAS:

January-June, 1996: Young People in the Church

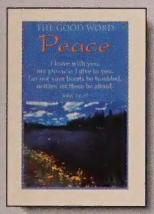
Jesus Taught the Early Church to Love Children
They Sent Children to War!
School Should be Fun
Mr. Raikes Ragamuffin Roundup
Teenager Mary Jones and Bibles for the World
Man of Faith and Prayer: George Mueller

July-December, 1996
Christian Hymnody and Hymn Writers

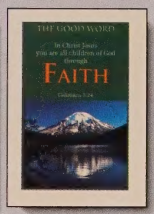
Singing & Making Melody to God
Ambrose
Isaac Watts
John Newton
Charles Wesley
Martin Luther

HELPS FOR THE CHURCH IN MINISTRY AT THE HOSPITAL AND NURSING HOME

Good Word Table Tents

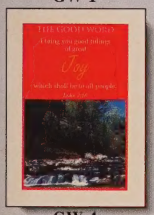


GW-1



GW-2

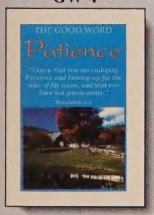
GW-3



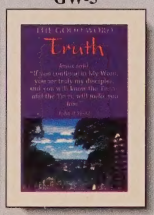
GW-4

GW-5

GW-6



GW-7



GW-8

Shut-ins and nursing home residents often appreciate it if the pastor can "leave a little something" after each visit. **The Good Word** is a series of eight different cards; each one emphasizing the assurance offered in a single Biblical word—which might well serve as the basis of a bedside devotion. Each card can be folded into a standing **"table tent"**—an ongoing visible reminder of **The Good Word** you share from God. Sold individually or in a sample packet which includes three of each table tent (for a total of 24 cards)—order a set for each person on your visitation list. Prices: **$.33** each/1-24 cards, **$.30** each/25+ cards. Sample packet (24 cards) Order Code **GW-P**, Cost, **$7.00**.

Healing Words

Healing Words is a resource designed specifically for ministry to those in your parish who are hospitalized. With larger-than-normal print, items kept brief, and an upbeat approach to the ministry of medicine, **Healing Words** seeks to build up the spiritual resources of the patient through such pertinent features as:

• Bible readings • Devotions • Prayers • Poetry • A Peanuts cartoon • An "Ask the Chaplain" column

Healing Words is available quarterly. Since the booklets are not dated on the cover, back issues can be used anytime. Orders will be accepted quarterly or for 1 year subscriptions. Bulk orders are shipped postpaid, **one month in advance**. Order Code **HW-1 for a single quarter's issue or HW-2 for a 1 year subscription**. Prices per issue: **$.74** each/5-9 copies, **$.66** each/10-19 copies, **$.55** each 20-49 copies, **$.45** each/50-99 copies, **$.39** each/100-199 copies, **$.24** each/1000+ copies.

Note: For chaplains or pastors ordering **50+ issues quarterly**, the back cover can be custom-imprinted with type and line art (your logo). Imprint orders must be sent by mail. Imprint rates: **$.04** each/50-99 copies, **$.0375** each/100-199 copies, **$.0325** each/200-299 copies. Additional discounts are available for larger quantities. Please inquire for details

Healing Words Bargains! A potpourri of undated back issues are available in sets of 12. Sorry, no imprints are available on these bargains. Price: 1 or 2 sets at **$3.99**/set , 3 or more sets at **$2.99**/set. Order Code **HW-A**

COMMUNION REGISTRATION CARDS

Communion Cards make it easy to keep track of your member's participation. Illustrated with full-color Christian art on white stock, these 2 1/2" x 5 1/2" cards come in two versions to suit your situation. **Cards can be custom imprinted** with your church's name and address. (Note that imprinting space is limited: a maximum of 4 lines, each about 26 letters long.) See the custom imprint instructions on page 37. Sorry, no phone orders on imprint orders.

Wording on the cards: Communion Registration: *Responding to our Lord's invitation to worthily prepared members of His Church, I come to partake of the Lord's supper, confessing my sins and trusting that Christ is truly present in this sacrament with full forgiveness, life and salvation. Date/Name/Address/If Visitor, name of home church, city & state/Please return this card.* **Communion Record:** *Date/Name/Address/If visitor, Home church,city & state/ I would like the pastor to call/"As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." I Cor. 11:26/Please return this card.*

Order Code **CR-1** Custom imprinted Registration Card *(stained glass)*, Order Code **CR-2** Custom imprinted Record Card *(chalice)* , First 400 (minimum order)**$20**; additional 1000s/**$12.95**.

Order Code **CR-3** Blank/Generic Registration Card *(stained glass)*, Order Code **CR-4** Blank/Generic Record Card *(chalice)* 100/**$2.75**; 1000/**$19.95**; additional 1000s/**$12.95.**

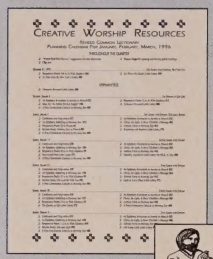
Custom Imprinted

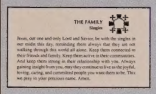
CR-1 **CR-2**

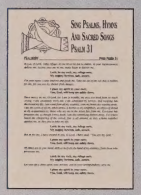
Blank/Generic

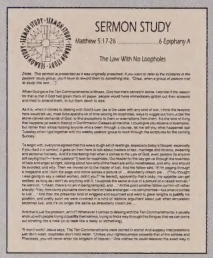
CR-3 **CR-4**

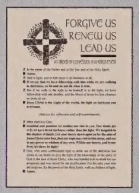
CREATIVE WORSHIP RESOURCES











Brighten your worship services throughout the year with **Creative Worship Resources**—simple enough for any size congregation.

Order by the quarter or save by ordering for a year. Shipped one month in advance of each quarter, you will receive fresh worship ideas for each Sunday—accenting the liturgy or season and involving your congregation in recognizing non-liturgical holidays too significant to neglect.

Responsive Litanies, Prayers, Clip Art and more!

Each quarter you will receive:

- **A Planning Calendar**, listing possible worship accents
- **Litanies, dramatic readings, and responsive prayers—all supplied typeset for reproduction, copying or retyping.** Participants receive copyright releases to use the material in their parish.
- **Artwork and titles** for bulletins and parish newsletters
- **Creative life-centered prayers** (on filecards for easy use and retrieval)
- **Prayer Pages**—devotions to begin church meetings
- **And Much More**

Cost per quarter $30—that's just $10 per month! Or, save **$21** and receive **Creative Worship Resources** on a regular basis for a full year. Cost: **$99**.

CZ-1 January-March '96
CZ-2 April-June '96 (available in March)
CZ-5 full year (beginning January '96)
CZ-6 full year (beginning April '96)

A sample of **Creative Worship Resources** is yours for the asking, **FREE!** Order Code **CY-F**.

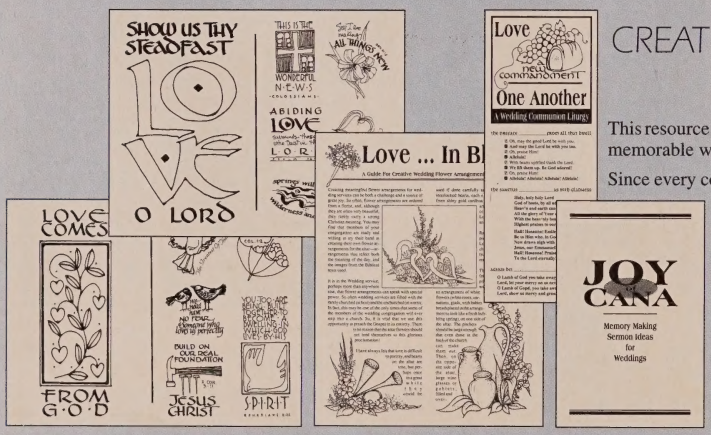
Creative Communications CLIP ART

Spruce up your bulletins, newsletters and other church publications with **Clip Art** from Creative Worship Resources...**subscribe** on a yearly basis. Each quarter you will receive 8 full-sized 8 1/2 x11 pages on glossy paper...ideal for reproduction. Lots and lots of images with seasonal accents: Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and more. **Creative Communications Clip Art** is unique in that it includes seasonal bulletin mastheads for each Sunday.

One year subscription cost (4 quarters), **$19.95**, Order Code **BW-5** (begins with the January through March quarter)

CREATIVE WEDDING RESOURCES

The Joy of Cana



This resource packet will not provide *everything* a pastor needs to conduct memorable weddings, but it offers all kinds of help!

Since every couple wants their wedding to be "special," here are suggestions for interactive processionals, various ways to use a unity candle, some new wedding hymns and prayers and litanies, a vow for the congregation, even ideas for creative, Scripture based flower arrangements. Also included are pages of photo ready Clip Art from the pen of Christian artist Sally Beck—perfect for bulletin covers and invitations!

The highlight is a collection of unique wedding homily ideas which actively involve the bride and groom with such physical objects as candles, water, wine, rocks, rope—lessons to remember a whole marriage long. Cost: **$19.95.** Order Code: **WP-1**

IMAGEPAK CLIP ART

• ImagePak—Matthew	47 pages	**$4.00**	**IP-1**
• ImagePak—Mark	32 pages	**$4.00**	**IP-2**
• ImagePak—Luke	54 pages	**$4.00**	**IP-3**
• ImagePak—John	46 pages	**$4.00**	**IP-4**
• ImagePak—The Four Gospels	187 pages	**$15.00**	**IP-5**
• ImagePak—Pictograms	30 pages	**$10.50**	**IP-6**
• ImagePak—Hohmann Pictograms	26 pages	**$10.50**	**IP-7**
• ImagePak—Design Elements	20 pages	**$7.00**	**IP-8**
• ImagePak—Entire Set loose leaf	263 pages	**$39.00**	**IP-A**

Total set features over 2,500 verbal and visual images, 263 pages, featuring more than 100 artists, many with international reputations. Size: 8-1/2" x 11" individual sheets. Publisher's original retail $79.95.

The four Gospel ImagePaks have a full page of visual & verbal images for each Gospel lesson in the 3-year lectionary—averaging more than 5 illustrations and 4 text units per Gospel reading

ImagePak Pictograms: 30 pages of high-quality reproducible Christian art portraying church events, stations of the cross, disciples, Gospel readings, and much more.

ImagePak Design Elements: 144 eye-catching graphics.

ImagePak Hohmann Pictograms: symbols for each Epistle lesson by acclaimed European woodcut artist Johannes Hohmann

NEW THIS YEAR!

Liturgical Images for Bulletins and Newsletters Each month you will receive hundreds of thought-provoking ideas and approximately 70 pieces of high quality art ready to copy and use in your bulletin or newsletter. This material is related to the 3-year lectionary and contains appropriate text and graphics for all three readings each Sunday and festivals. Material will be delivered two months at a time (e.g. January/February, March/April, etc.). 1-year Subscription, printed Code **IP-K** Cost $75.00, 1-year Subscription, printed + disk Code **IP-L** Cost $115.00. For a free sample, Order Code **IP-Y**

COORDINATED CHRISTIAN STATIONERY

- Personal stationery for every use
  - Contemporary Christian designs in color
    - 100% recycled paper and matching envelopes

You'll find the right stationery for any writing need among these five different sized stationery items on cream colored stock:

- Monarch-sized stationery (7 x 10") 15 printed sheets, 15 blank sheets and 15 envelopes per pack, Cost **$5.95**
- Petite notes (4 1/4 x 5 1/2") 12 notes and 12 envelopes per pack, Cost **$4.95**
- Notecards (3 1/2 x 6") 25 cards and 25 envelopes per pack, Cost **$3.95**
- Postalettes (4 x 6" folded) 15 cards and 15 seals per pack, Cost **$3.50**
- Postcards (4 1/8 x 5 7/8") 15 cards per pack, Cost **$2.95**

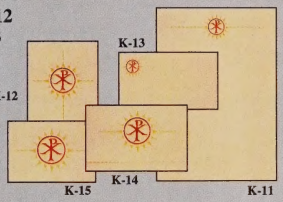
All sizes are available with one of the five contemporary two-color designs shown here.

- **CHI RHO**
- **GOD BLESS YOU**
- **GRACE AND PEACE**
- **GREEK CROSS**
- **MODERN CROSS**

You may order **packs of any one sized item** with your choice of one design. *Save 15%* when you *order sets featuring any one design including all five sizes of stationery*. To order a set, use the set Order Code. Cost **$18.50**

CHI RHO design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-11**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-12**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-13**
Postalette pack,
Order Code **K-14**
Postcard pack,
Order Code **K-15**
CHI RHO set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-10**

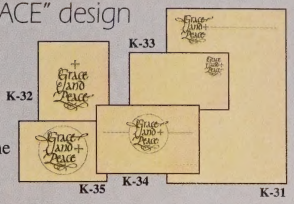


"GOD BLESS YOU" design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-21**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-22**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-23**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-24**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-25**
GOD BLESS YOU set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-20**

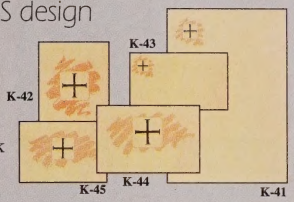
"GRACE AND PEACE" design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-31**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-32**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-33**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-34**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-35**
GRACE AND PEACE set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-30**



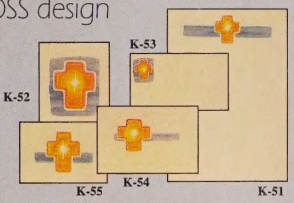
GREEK CROSS design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-41**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-42**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-43**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-44**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-45**
GREEK CROSS set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-40**



MODERN CROSS design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-51**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-52**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-53**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-54**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-55**
MODERN CROSS set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-50**



CHRISTIAN CARDS TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS

JOURNEY OF LIFE CARDS

Caring words of faith to comfort and support those facing a terminal illness, tragedy or personal crisis. Each card is 6 1/8" x 4 1/2". Envelopes are included. Cost: **$6**/10 cards. Order code for assortment (1 each of 10 cards) **JL-A**.

We let go of this world to let God welcome us into our eternal home. All shall be well with us in God. **JL-1**

May Christ's love enfold you, comfort you, and lead you into unending life and joy. **JL-2**

Thinking of you, loving you, praying for you. **JL-3**

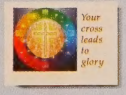
May you feel God's love at every step on the way. God love you! **JL-4**

Know that Christ is your companion in all you suffer. May his love touch and comfort you. **JL-5**

Eye has not seen what God has prepared for those who love. May God's love embrace you. **JL-6**

We journey toward that light, the God of us all, who lights the sun. Blessings and prayers. **JL-7**

God's love embraces and welcomes you. You are loved. Praying for you. **JL-8**

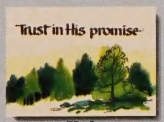


Your example of faith and patient love is admired and appreciated. God bless and love you! **JL-9**

God be with you as you journey in faith to a glorious life that never ends. God bless and support you. **JL-0**

SEASONS OF LIFE CARDS

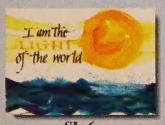
SL-1



SL-2

SL-5

SL-4



SL-6

SL-7

SL-3

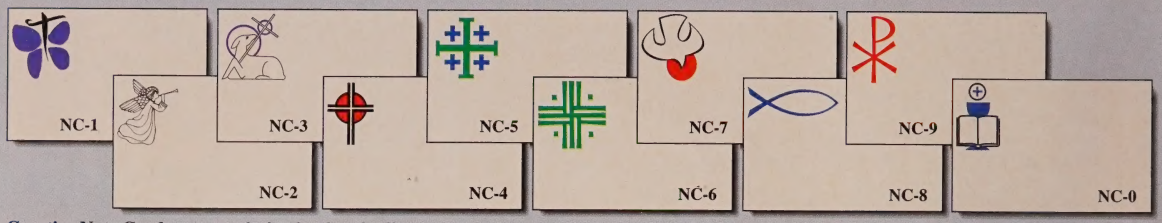
SL-8

Bring caring words of faith to comfort and support those facing a terminal illness, tragedy or personal crisis with these entirely new note cards. Graced by Sally Beck's art, each 4 1/2 x 5 3/4" card features an appropriate greeting. Matching envelopes included. Assortment of 8 cards or 8 of one design *(see individual cards for Order Codes)*, Cost **$5.95.** Order code for **assortment** (1 each of 8 cards) **SL-F**.

SL-1 *"May the LORD make you strong. Your strength, your endurance, your patience are gifts from God—and a beautiful witness to all who know you. You are in our prayers."* plus Col. 1:11-12. **SL-2** *"Trust in His promise. The Lord who sees your weary heart will bear your burden and give you peace. Trust in that promise."* plus Mt. 11:28. **SL-3** *"Under the shadow of your wings. May you know the protecting power and love of Jesus Christ in this difficult time."* plus Ps. 36:7. **SL-4** *"He who watches over you will not slumber—Ps. 121:3. May our Lord who loves you dearly give you peaceful days and quiet nights. This is our prayer for you."* **SL-5** *"I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me. We pray that you will feel the light and love of our Lord in your present darkness."* plus Ps. 23:4." **SL-6** *"I am the LIGHT of the world. May the light of Christ brighten every corner of your life and heart."* plus John 8:12. **SL-7** *"The hand of Christ touch you—hold you—lead you to your heavenly home."* plus Ps. 73:23-4. **SL-8** *"You comfort me and make me glad, Lord. May God the Father uphold you; May Christ our Lord enfold you; May the Spirit give you peace."* plus Ps. 94:19.

1-800-325-9414 8-5 CST

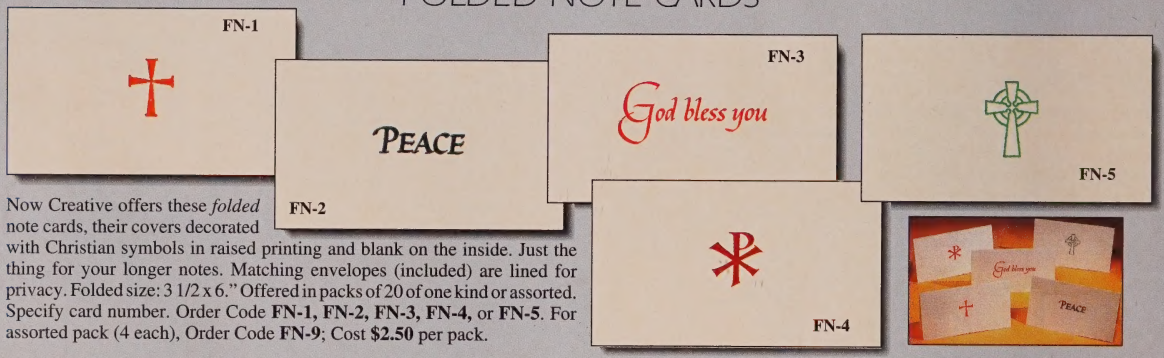
CREATIVE NOTE CARDS



Creative Note Cards—*just right for the church office, school, home, personal use or as gifts.* Convenient for those brief reminders and thank you notes, these cards will suit your needs. Creative offers ten note cards with a choice of Christian symbols in color on white card stock. Designs are available individually or assorted. Note cards are 3 1/2" x 6" and come with matching envelopes.

100 Assorted cards (ten of each design) with envelopes, Order Code **NX-1**, Cost **$5.95;** 25 cards of one design (specify Order Code): Cost **$1.95**

FOLDED NOTE CARDS

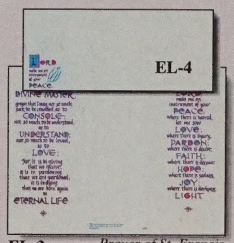


Now Creative offers these *folded* note cards, their covers decorated with Christian symbols in raised printing and blank on the inside. Just the thing for your longer notes. Matching envelopes (included) are lined for privacy. Folded size: 3 1/2 x 6." Offered in packs of 20 of one kind or assorted. Specify card number. Order Code **FN-1, FN-2, FN-3, FN-4,** or **FN-5**. For assorted pack (4 each), Order Code **FN-9**; Cost **$2.50** per pack.

EQ-1 *1 Thessalonians 1:2-3*

Perfect for Special Thank You Notes!

EL-1 *Aaronic Benediction*

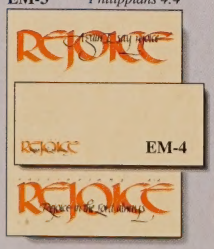


EL-3 *Prayer of St. Francis*

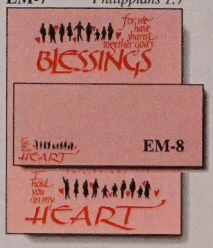
EM-5 *Psalm 23*

EM-1 *Romans 15:13*

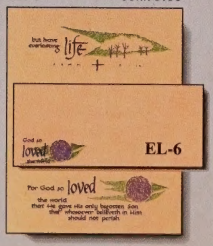
EM-3 *Philippians 4:4*



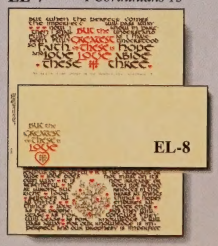
EM-7 *Philippians 1:7*



EL-5 *John 3:16*



EL-7 *1 Corinthians 13*



PASTORAL EPISTLE LETTERHEAD

Pastoral Epistle Letterhead—This unique parish resource provides stock sheets that can be used for a variety of parish messages. They also work perfectly for personal and special notes from the clergy. Sold in 50s and shipped flat, on special laid stock—ideal for mimeograph or offset. Matching envelopes can also be ordered. Letterhead cost: **$7**/100, **$32**/500, **$60**/1000; Envelope cost: **$7**/100, **$32**/500, **$60**/1000

Sampler Packet (75 each of four letterheads) 300 letterheads in all; Order Code **EL-L**, Cost: **$20**; Sampler Packet (75 each of four envelopes) 300 envelopes in all; Order Code **EL-E**, Cost: **$20**

Please be sure to specify which four letterheads and envelopes you wish to order.

- Weddings
- Bereavement
- Confirmation
- Birthdays
- Sickness/Shut-ins
- New Members
- Baptisms
- Personal Notes

COLORFUL CUSTOM IMPRINTED STATIONERY FOR YOUR CHURCH

▪ CHOICE OF TWO PAPER STOCKS, COLOR LOGOS ▪ MATCHING ENVELOPES ▪ BUSINESS CARDS ▪ MEMO PADS
▪ DESIGN YOUR OWN STATIONERY—NO EXTRA COST

NEW THIS YEAR!

Now you can afford multicolor letterhead and envelopes printed on fine, white paper. Choose either our 24# watermarked 25% cotton bond or our 24# multipurpose (suitable for copier and laser printer). Business cards come on 65# white card stock; memo pads, on white stock.

Your personalized imprint (in black) can include such information as name, address, phone(s), name(s) of pastor(s), etc. Plus, Creative will print the logo of your choice in color. Logos printed on memo pads in black only.

Denominational logos appear in *two* colors on letterhead, envelopes and business cards; (denominational logos appear only in black on memo pads.) *Faith Design* symbols appear in *four* colors. *Other Creative symbols* are available in *one* color (as shown in illustrations.)

Pick our new *Spectrum Designs* to create your own stationery with pre-designed elements. Combine the *symbol color bar* (includes Christian symbols shown) with a type layout of your choice. Or use the *rainbow color bar* without symbols and add a Creative symbol of your choice—or your own logo—plus imprinting in black. (See example)

At no extra charge, Creative can also print stationery to your specifications (on our white stock) and imprint your parish logo in one color—red, blue, green or black *(see color swatches).*

HOW TO ORDER

1 Clearly print or type out the exact wording you wish to appear on your letterhead, envelope, business card and/or memo pad.

2 Make a photocopy of this catalog page and on it circle the logo and/or color bar you wish on the stationery. For custom designs, attach a sketch and, if desired, a clear copy of your own logo. Specify the color you desire.

3 Circle the paper stock and quantities you wish for each item.

4 Mail with completed order form on the last page of this catalog. Include a phone number on the order form so we may call you, if necessary. Please do not order by fax or phone, except for reprints. (Request to see proof before printing, if desired.)

5 To discuss questions or custom requirements before making your order, call 800-325-9414.

LETTERHEAD
24#, 25% cotton; Order Code **PL-9**
$44.95/500, **$54.95**/1000, **$29.95**/additional 1000s

24#, multi-purpose wove; Order Code **PL-0**
$39.95/500, **$49.95**/1000, **$24.95**/additional 1000s

MATCHING 2ND SHEETS
25% cotton, Order Code **PV-B; $15.00**/500
Multi-purpose wove, Order Code **PV-M; $12.00**/500

MATCHING #10 ENVELOPES
White, with logo in color, your imprint in black.
24#, 25% cotton, Order Code **PE-9**
$49.95/500, **$64.95**/1000, **$48.95**/additional 1000s

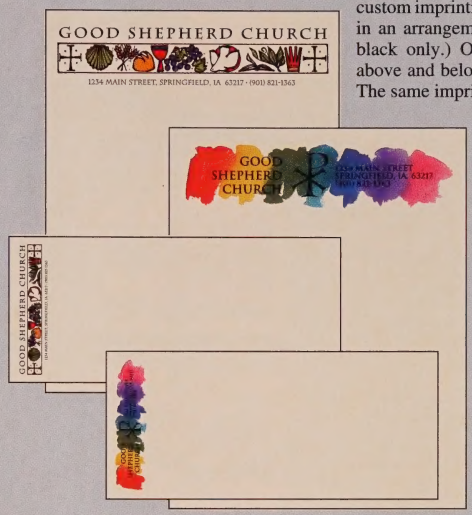
24#, multi-purpose wove,
Order Code **PE-0**
$36.95/500, **$49.95**/1000, **$34.95**/additional 1000s

BUSINESS CARDS
white, 2 x 3 1/2", 65# stock; color logo, black imprint;
Order Code, **PC-9**; **$20**/200 cards, **$30**/500 cards, **$45**/1000

MEMO PADS
5 1/2 x 8 1/2", white paper, 150 sheets each, black imprint,
Order Code, **PM-9**; **$5.95**/2 pads, **$8.95**/4 pads

NEW FOR 1996 SPECTRUM DESIGN™ STATIONERY

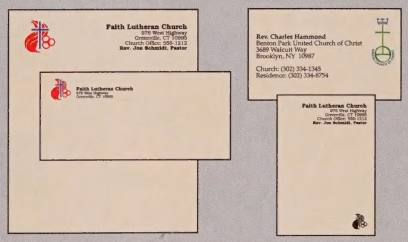
New *Spectrum Design*™ stationery features mix and match elements to create your own unique stationery (see illustrations). Combine the *Spectrum* **rainbow color bar** with your custom imprinting and one of the Christian symbols in an arrangement of your choice (overprinted in black only.) Or arrange your custom imprinting above and below the *Spectrum* **symbol color bar**. The same imprinting will be provided on matching envelopes. *(Sorry, no matching business cards. Memo pads available in black only.)*



—or send us a clear, black-and-white copy of your own design.

DENOMINATIONAL STATIONERY

Identify your church clearly and attractively with your church body. These 2-color logos appear as shown on letterhead and slightly reduced on matching envelopes and business cards. Logo on memo pads in black only. Your denomination's logo not here? Send us a clear copy and your preferred color.



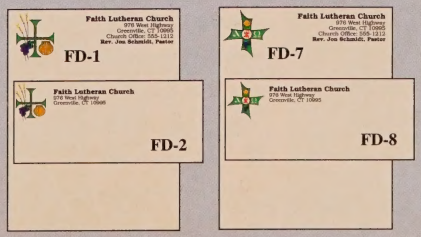
or send us your denominational logo

Blue Red Green Black

Custom Design Colors

FAITH DESIGN™ STATIONERY

Faith Design™ stationery features Christian symbols in four colors. The two designs shown are available on the same fine papers as our other stationery. *(Sorry, no matching business cards. Memo pads available in black only.)*



CLOSEOUT SPECIAL!

*For a limited time we are offering two discontinued Faith Design™ styles at half price—**including custom imprinting!***

FD-5
FD-6

FD-3
FD-4

Don't pass up this opportunity! Order Codes **FD-3** (letterhead), **FD-4** (envelope) or **FD-5** (letterhead), **FD-6** (envelope) as illustrated. *(Half off catalog price for 24#, 25% cotton or 24# multipurpose paper, our choice, as available.)*

PARISH OCCASION CARDS

Twenty Cards Now Available Including Baptism Birthday Cards

Parish Occasion Cards offer beautiful and convenient ways to send heart-felt messages to members and visitors of your church. Appropriate for a variety of common occasions, the cards feature colorful cover art on fine quality off-white stock; inside, a brief message and Scripture verse, plus plenty of space for a personal message.

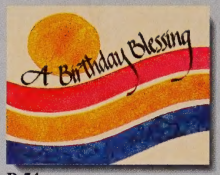
CARDS CAN BE CUSTOM IMPRINTED with your pastor/parish name, address, phone, etc. (See the instructions for imprinted products on the page 37. Sorry, no phone orders on imprint orders.) You may combine any number of the different cards to reach a quantity discount price. Specify Order Code(s) for design(s) desired. Cards are 4 3/8" x 5 3/4" supplied flat with **quality, matching envelopes.** ***Please Note:*** *Cards with order codes underlined measure 5" x 6 7/8".*

Cost: **Imprinted $.65** each/25-49; **$.56** each/50-99, **$.46** each/100+.
Without imprint $.58 each/25-49, **$.48** each/50-99, **$.42** each/100+.

P-51

P-52

P-53



P-54

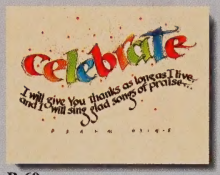
P-55

P-56

P-57

P-58

P-59



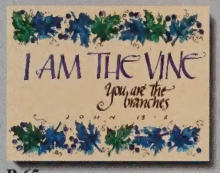
P-60

P-61

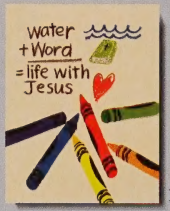
P-62

P-63

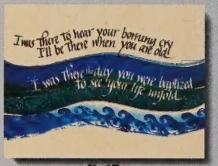
P-64



P-65



P-66



P-67

P-68

Thank You Cards

Friend in Christ (for visitors) *"A new face, a new friend in Christ! Thank you for sharing your faith in our worship service. Please come again."* plus *Ps. 122:1.* Order Code with imprinting **P-11**; without imprinting **P-51.**

Thank you for worshiping with us (for visitors) *"Our songs of praise were more joyful today because your voice joined ours—Please come again!* plus *Ps. 95:1.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-12***; without imprinting ***P-52***.

Thank you (for volunteer appreciation, departing members) *"Your special gifts to our Christian family will always be remembered—We thank you in His name."* plus *1 Thess. 1:2-3.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-13***; without imprinting ***P-53***.

Birthday Cards

A Birthday Blessing *"God gives us the gift of life— God gives us the gift of life in Christ— God gave us the gift of you. We rejoice with you as you celebrate your birthday."* Order Code with imprinting **P-14;** without imprinting **P-54**

Enjoy your special day *"We share the joy of your special day, For God made you in a special way, And we are thankful."* Order Code with imprinting **P-15**; without imprinting **P-55**

Birthday Blessings (from the church to a child) *"Your church family joins with you in saying thank you to Jesus for giving you the gift of life."* plus *Is. 43:1,4.* Order Code with imprinting **P-16**; without imprinting **P-56**.

Baptism

I was there to hear your borning cry...I'll be there when you are old...I was there the day you were baptized...to see your life unfold. *"The Lord indeed is with you every day of your life and on this, your special day. Happy Baptismal Birthday."* Order Code with imprinting **P-27**; without imprinting **P-67**

I have called you by name; you are mine. *"Remember! you are chosen, and you are loved. Happy Baptism Birthday"* Order Code with imprinting **P-28**; without imprinting **P-68**

Water + Word = Life with Jesus. *"Water + Word = Life in Christ. Happy Life-in-Christ Day! Happy Baptism Birthday!"* plus Galatians 3:27. Code with imprinting **P-26**; without imprinting **P-66**

Cards for Other Occasions

Welcome to your new home (for persons new to your community) *"We are glad you made our community your home. We hope you will make our church your spiritual home."* plus *Prov. 26:10.* Order Code with imprinting **P-17**; without imprinting **P-57**.

Be at Peace (for shut-ins) *"...in the promises of a faithful God and the love of your family in Christ. We miss your smile, your laughter, your song of faith. You are with us in spirit, in our prayers, in our hearts."* plus *Rom. 15:13.* Order Code with imprinting **P-18**; without imprinting **P-58**

May you know God's healing touch (for persons recovering from illness, surgery, etc.) *"The Lord has promised loving care— We promise you our faithful prayer. We look forward to your return to health."* plus *Jer. 17:14.* Order Code with imprinting **P-19**; without imprinting **P-59**

Celebrate (anniversary) *"Your friends in Christ rejoice with you as you celebrate this day of remembered blessing."* plus *Ps. 63:4-5.* Order Code with imprinting **P-20**; without imprinting **P-60**

Welcome (for a new baby) *"You have a new blessing from the Lord! We welcome your new family member—and ours. Love and best wishes from your family in Christ."* plus *Ps. 127:3.* Order Code with imprinting **P-21**; without imprinting **P-61**

Congratulations! (for milestones and achievements) *"Our happy songs of thanks we raise to sing with you our Father's praise. Your family in Christ rejoices with you."* plus *Eph. 1:3.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-22***; without imprinting ***P-62***.

Remembering You (for shut-ins, those at a distance, or anniversary of a loss) *"You are a special part of our family in Christ—You are remembered with love."* plus *Heb. 13:5.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-23***; without imprinting ***P-63***.

Our Lord Be With You (for loss, illness or other crisis) *"We look to our LORD for strength and healing—we look to each other to see our LORD in action. You are in our prayers."* plus *Phil. 4:19-20.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-24***; without imprinting ***P-64***.

I am the Vine, You are the branches (for persons who have not attended worship) *"We miss the special blessings you give our church family when you worship with us. Please join us this Sunday."* plus *1 Thess. 1:2-3.* Order Code with imprinting **P-25**; without imprinting **P-65**.

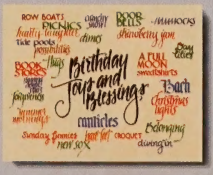
PLEASE NOTE!

Order codes listed under the card illustration are for **non-imprinted** cards. Please look in the text above for the appropriate code if you desire **imprinted** cards. **See page 37 for imprint instructions.**

NEW ADDITIONS TO OUR PARISH CARD SERIES

Thank You for joining us in worship (for visitors) *"As we celebrate the Lord's presence, we also give thanks for your presence among us. We invite you to return soon."* plus *Ps. 16:11.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-31***; without imprinting ***P-71***.

P-71



Birthday Joys and Blessings *"May you find God's blessings all around you."* plus *John 10:10.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-32***; without imprinting ***P-72***.

P-72

SAMPLER

Examine all 20 Parish Occasion Cards yourself by ordering this special packet. You receive one each of the cards plus 20 envelopes. Order Code PS-S, Cost: $7.95

"REJOICE IN THE LORD" CUSTOM IMPRINTED CERTIFICATES

Just the right way to recognize special milestones in the Christian life of members of your congregation! **"Rejoice in the Lord"** certificates create a memorable record of the special occasion ... and the Word of God included in each certificate puts the accent in just the right place.

These **Custom Imprinted Certificates** are unique as well as economical! You can combine any number of the 10 different certificates to reach a quantity discount price. **"Rejoice in the Lord"** certificates are printed on fine quality off-white paper and come with matching envelopes. The certificate is imprinted with the church and pastor's name ... or with other wording of your choice. The certificate size is 7" x 10" when open and 7" x 5" when folded. Please see page 37 for special instructions that apply to imprinted materials—space is provided there for your imprint information. Sorry, no phone orders—all imprint orders must be mailed to us. **Certificates may also be ordered with no imprinting.**

Cost with imprinting: **$.65** each/25-34, **$.56** each/35-50, and **$.46** each/51+. Cost without imprinting: **$.58** each/25-34, **$.48** each/35-50, and **$.42** each/51+. **Includes a mailing envelope.**

SAMPLER

Examine all 10 Certificates yourself by ordering this special packet. You receive one each of the cards plus 10 envelopes. Order Code CS-X, Cost: $3.95

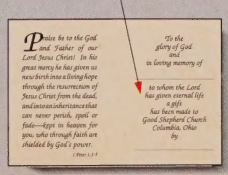
PERSONALIZED MEMORIAL CARD

Memorial Card packets for the parish

A beautiful full-color memorial card, imprinted with your church's name, comes with its own mailing envelope and a remittance envelope that can be mailed to the church or placed in an offering basket. Each set is packaged in a window envelope with guidelines for use of the card. The memorial words can be customized at your request; indicate changes you desire either on the order form or on a separate sheet of paper. See page 37 for special instructions for imprinted products. Page 37 also contains a space to provide imprint information.

Order Code **DT-H**, cost: **$12**/25, **$19**/50, **$33**/100 (Price includes the Memorial Card, mailing envelope, remittance envelope & imprinting.)

Your Church Imprint Here



T-10 with imprinting
T-30 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
In the
RITE OF CONFIRMATION
has borne witness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
Date — Pastor
Witness — Witness

Confirmation
Inside: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

T-14 with imprinting
T-34 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
In the Spirit of Christian Love
bore witness to the
BAPTISM
of
with a commitment to ongoing prayer and concern for this child's growth in the Christian Faith.
Date — Pastor

Baptismal Sponsor
Inside: Ephesians 3:16-17

T-11 with imprinting
T-31 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
has made a
PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
and is received into the fellowship of the Church.
Date — Pastor
Witness — Witness

Profession of Faith
Inside: 2 Peter 3:18

T-15 with imprinting
T-35 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
for the support and love that
has given to the church through both time and talents
by
We show our
APPRECIATION
to you for your work in God's Kingdom.
Date — Pastor

Special Thanks
Inside: 1 Thessalonians 1:3

T-12 with imprinting
T-32 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
child of
born on , 19
was
BAPTIZED
in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
on the day of
in the year of your Lord
Sponsors
Pastor

Baptism
Inside: Romans 6:4

T-16 with imprinting
T-36 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
has successfully completed the prescribed course of study and is hereby honored by the church and its members with this
CERTIFICATE
Date — Awarded by

Religious Ed. Accomplishment
Inside: Colossians 1:9-10

T-13 with imprinting
T-33 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
and
are united in
HOLY MATRIMONY
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Date
Witness — Pastor
Witness

Matrimony
Inside: Colossians 3:15-17

T-17 with imprinting
T-37 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
For the first time
has joined this congregation at the Lord's Table for
THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST
on the day of , 19
Witness — Pastor

First Communion
Inside: John 1:29

T-18 with imprinting
T-38 no imprinting

Rejoice In The Lord
This certifies that
was
Baptized
in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
on the day of
in the year of our Lord
Witnesses
Pastor

Adult Baptism
Inside: Romans 6:4

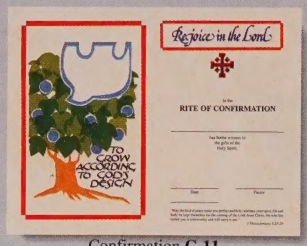
T-26 with imprinting
T-46 no imprinting

REJOICE IN THE LORD
Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said,
"HERE AM I; SEND ME!"
name
has been chosen to serve the people of God at
IMPRINT CHURCH
TOWN, STATE
as
There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities, but the same God gives power to everyone for everything he does. The Spirit gives to everyone ability for one, but the same Spirit gives wisdom to someone through a message, and knowledge to someone else through the same message. The Spirit gives faith to someone else, healing to someone else, and miracles to someone else. The Spirit gives the ability to know the difference between true and false messages from God. The Spirit gives to someone else the ability to speak in different languages, and gives to someone else the ability to understand what they say. But all these things are done by the Spirit, who gives to each person, for the good of all. 1 Cor. 12:4-7

Appointment
Inside: Corinthians 12:4-7

PERSONALIZED CERTIFICATES

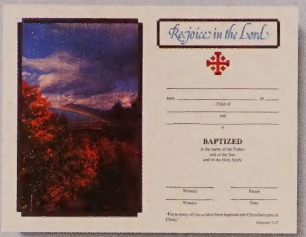
Confirmation **C-10**



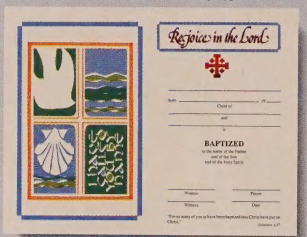
Confirmation **C-11**

Profession of Faith **C-12**

Profession of Faith **C-13**

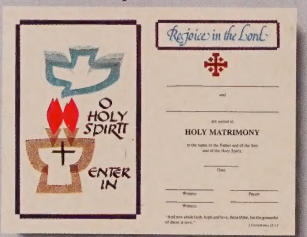


Baptism **C-14**

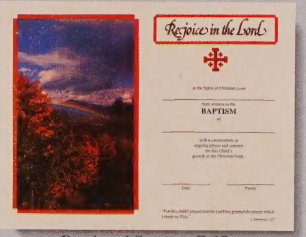


Baptism **C-15**

Marriage **C-16**



Marriage **C-17**



Baptismal Sponsor **C-18**

Baptismal Sponsor **C-19**

Special Thanks **C-20**

Religious Ed. Accomplishment **C-21**

"Rejoice in the Lord" Personalized certificates... Individually imprinted with your church name and foil stamped with the cross in gold.

Here is a series of 8 1/2"x11" presentation certificates **custom imprinted with the name of your church.** One series offers contemporary symbols while the other features inspirational photography—both are printed on high quality sturdy stock and are suitable for framing.

All certificates may be mixed to bring you the maximum quantity discount. Please see the special ordering instructions on page 37. "Rejoice in the Lord" customized certificates provide a lasting reminder of those "high points" in Christian experience.

Orders for certificates **must be sent in by mail.** See the instructions on page 37.

Cost of imprinted certificates:

$10/25,
$19/50,
$35/100,
$140/500

Certificates may also be ordered without imprinting. *Blank certificates are sent immediately. To order* ***blank*** *certificates, substitute a* ***"B"*** *for the* ***"C"*** *listed in the Order Code. Imprinted certificates take 4-5 weeks.*

Cost of certificates without imprints.

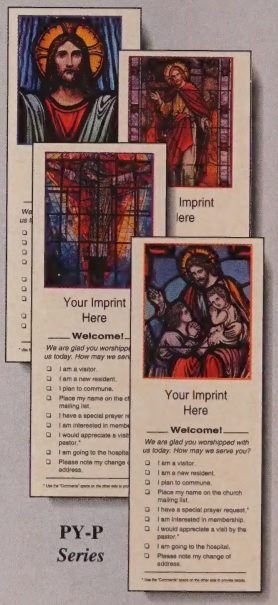
$8/25,
$15/50,
$30/100,
$120/500

Cost of matching envelopes:

$4/25, **$6**/50, **$8**/100, **$38**/500
Envelope order code **CE-N**

PERSONALIZED PEW CARDS

PW-P *Series*



PY-P *Series*

These colorful custom imprinted **Pew Cards** present the variety of services in ministry you offer to members and extend a special welcome to visitors. The top portion of the personalized Pew Card is torn off and kept as a gift bookmark and record of attendance. The bottom portion is returned to the church office. You receive equal quantities of all four colorful designs (either series)—each with a different picture on the front and Bible passage on the back. The church and pastor's name are custom imprinted on the front. Price for either series **$10**/100, **$40**/500, **$70**/1000

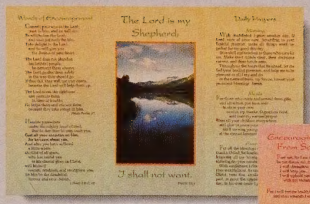
HOSPITAL CARE CARDS

Designed with the hospitalized or shut-in person in mind, these beautiful Hospital Care Cards can be mailed, or may be used as a reminder of a visit.

The Lord Is My Shepherd

This card features daily prayers accompanied by quotes from I Peter and Psalm 37. A lengthy quotation from Psalm 139 highlights God's constant, guiding presence.

Order Code 1-HC



Trust In The Lord

Trust in God's love and power! Verses from the old hymn *I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus*, Bible verses, and a message entitled, "How Are You?" emphasize the fact that God cares and acts.

Order Code 2-HC

He Cares For You

I Peter 5:7, "Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you." is highlighted, with other Bible verses. There are also daily prayers, and a message entitled "You Are Never Alone!"

Order Code 3-HC

An Ever Present Help

This card focuses on God's constant presence and good will. Daily prayers, Scripture, and a poetic paraphrase of Psalm 23 are included.

Order Code 4-HC.

A Spanish version is also available. Order Code 1-SP.

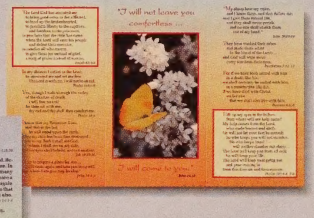
SPECIAL CARE CARDS

Whether it be the death of a loved one, or a new life in a family, these Care Cards remind the recipient that God is present, and that God's people care.

A Card For Comfort

This card points to the comfort of God's Word at the time of ultimate loss and victory. The **Comfort Care Card** uses Scripture to emphasize God's remembered promises of comfort, hope, and eternity.

Order Code 1-BC



A Card For Cheer

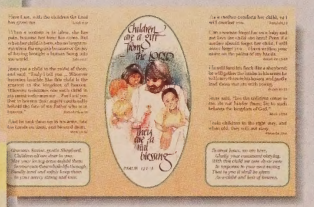
The promises of God offer comfort and new hope to those who are confined. For times "when every day seems the same," the **Cheer Care Card** can lift the spirit and open the heart to brighter thoughts.

Order Code 1-CC

A Card For A New Child

Quotes from Scripture help the recipient of the **Maternity Care Card** to recognize that children are a gift of God. This card highlights God's hand in the growth of a family (through childbirth or adoption).

Order Code 1-MC



A Card For An Ill Child

Stories of Jesus with the children, lively prayers and children's songs help the recipient of the **Children's Care Card** to realize that God is always present. This card highlights God's power over all illness.

Order Code 1-KC

CARE CARD COSTS

Cost: **$24**/50, **$37**/100, **$84**/500, **$145**/1000
Custom sized envelopes are also available for the Care Cards,
Order Code **HC-E** Cost: **$6**/50, **$10**/100, **$40**/500, **$70**/1000

Special Instructions For Imprinted Products

Orders for imprinted items cannot be taken over the phone—they must be mailed. To order any of the custom imprinted materials please type or print the copy you wish imprinted in the space provided to the right. Note that **Care Cards** allow for four lines at the bottom and three lines at the top. The **Pew Cards**, **Certificates**, **Communion Cards** and **Parish Occasion Cards** allow for three lines of imprinting, and the **Memorial Cards** allow for two lines. If you wish your denominational or church logo to appear on the **Care Cards** in place of the standard illustration (a cross) please send along a sample copy (line art only). When imprinted material is ordered with other products from Creative Communications, the other products will be shipped immediately and the imprinted items will be shipped separately. Please allow four weeks for delivery of the personalized cards.

Please use this space to provide typed or printed information for personalized products. Use the bottom lines to supply information for the Memorial Card, certificates and Pew Cards.

Top: _____
(Care Cards Only) _____
_____

Bottom: _____
_____
_____
_____

☐ Please check this box if including your own logo.

NEW THIS YEAR!

EASTER CARDS

These new Easter cards express the true meaning of the season through colorful art, calligraphy and Christ-centered messages. Matching envelopes are included for these 6 1/8 x 4 1/2" cards. Your choice of two different assortments, **ED-A** or **ED-X,** include 10 cards each, (two of each design in the assortment). You may also purchase 10 cards of one design (See individual cards for Order Codes). Cost **$6.00**

ED-1

ED-2

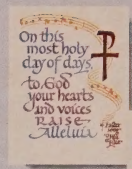
ED-3

ED-4

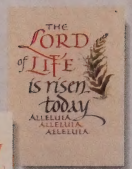
ED-5

Assortment **ED-X**

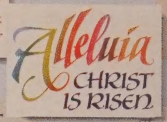
- **ED-1** *"Christ's resurrection conquered death. Rejoice in his triumph! Easter Blessings."*
- **ED-2** *"May the joy of the risen Christ be with you."*
- **ED-3** *"Christ our Life has conquered death. Alleluia! Happy Easter!"*
- **ED-4** *"Let us rejoice and be glad! Happy Easter!"*
- **ED-5** *"Blessed Easter, Alleluia!"*



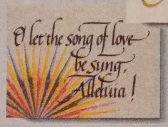
ED-6



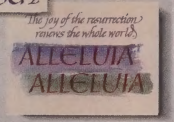
ED-7



ED-8



ED-9



ED-0

Assortment **ED-A**

- **ED-6** *"May the blessing of the risen Christ fill you with joy and hope."*
- **ED-7** *"May you celebrate the great promise of Easter in faith and joy."*
- **ED-8** *"May new Easter life be yours in abundance. A Blessed Easter!"*
- **ED-9** *"Christ has died, Christ is risen, alleluia! Happy Easter."*
- **ED-0** *"May Easter joy and peace fill your life day after day. A blessed Easter."*

NEW THIS YEAR!

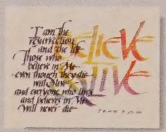
THE SHEPHERD GUIDES

Grief is a process—often a long process. "The Shepherd Guides" card set helps grieving members of your congregation by letting them know that you care about them throughout their **journey of grief**—and that Jesus is with them all the way! This **set of five cards** is to be sent to your grieving parishioner throughout the first year of their grief—one card sent immediately, one at Christmas, one at Easter, one at All Saints' Day, one at the first anniversary of the death. The cover of each card has words of a meaningful Bible verse, in beautiful full-color calligraphy from the pen of Christian artist Sally Beck. Inside is a special prayer, a kind sentiment, and a space for a personal note. Here is a meaningful way to minister to your people when they need comfort the most. **Set of five cards and envelopes** with an organizing cover-envelope for easy filing—Order Code: **GH-6**, Cost: **$2.99.** Or, order the card individually: Funeral Card, Order Code: **GH-1**. Christmas Card, Order Code: **GH-2**. Easter Card, Order Code: **GH-3**. All Saints' Card, Order Code: **GH-4**. One Year Anniversary Card, Order Code **GH-5**. Cost per card: 1-24/**$.58** each; 25-49/**$.48**; 50+/**$.42**.

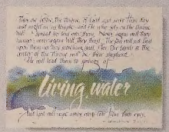
RESOURCES FOR GRIEF MINISTRY

GH-1

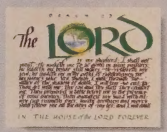
GH-2



GH-3



GH-4



GH-5

NEW THIS YEAR!

BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARY CARDS

Help SPONSORS BE GODPARENTS For Years To Come With A Gift That Truly "Keeps On Giving"

Finally an answer to the **sponsors**' question: "What do we do now?" These new cards help sponsors build a nurturing Christian relationship with their godchildren. These age-appropriate **Baptismal Birthday Cards** for children from one to 12 years of age are available in sets of 12, **one for each year from baptism to confirmation**. These cards help convey a sponsor's Christian care for a godchild on the child's baptismal anniversary. Each year's message varies, but all are grounded in the power and blessing of God's baptismal grace. 4 1/2 x 5 3/4" cards feature original, full-color art.

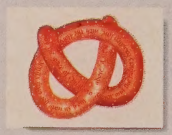
Sets of 12 cards with matching envelopes. Order Code **BT-A** Cost: 1-4 sets, **$4.99**; 5-9 sets, **$4.79**; 10+ sets, **$4.49**

Individual cards also available for sponsors, the church or other caring adults. Sets of 12 identical cards (prices same as **BT-A**) with envelopes. Please order by code numbers shown with illustrations. Order Code **BT-B** year one; **BT-C** year two; **BT-D** year three; **BT-E** year four; **BT-F** year five; **BT-G** year six; **BT-H** year seven; **BT-I** year eight; **BT-J** year nine; **BT-K** year ten; **BT-L** year eleven; **BT-M** year twelve.

BT-B

BT-D

BT-E


BT-I

BT-J

BT-K

BT-C

BT-F

BT-G

BT-H

BT-L

BT-M

PARISH RESOURCES ▪ GIFTS ▪ ITEMS FOR THE CHURCH OFFICE

Potluck Placemat

It's always a pleasure dining at church, but you can make the experience even more pleasurable with these colorful **potluck placemats**. Illustrated in rich earth tones, these 11" by 17" placemats can be used for any meal at any time of the year. A Scriptural account of the feeding of the 5000, several common table prayers, and a reflection on the ways God coordinates our efforts invite parishioners to once again taste and see God's grace and favor in the food, fun, and fellowship of the potluck dinner. Ideal for use at special receptions and conference luncheons at your parish as well. Order Code: **PL-1,** Cost: **$17**/100, **$69**/500, **$99**/1000

Thanksgiving Coin Bread Box

This coin holder is just the thing for food ministry collections at Thanksgiving or year 'round. Constructed of sturdy stock and printed in full color to resemble a loaf, the Bread Box is easily assembled into a 4x2.5x2.5" box. Shipped flat, each box fits in a 6"x9" envelope for mailing. Matching *Bread Box: Sharing God's Blessings* envelopes available. Bread Box Code **BB-2**. Cost: **$.33**/1-99, **$.31**/100-499, **$.29**/500+ Envelopes Order Code **BB-9**. Cost: **$.11**/1-499, **$.10**/500+

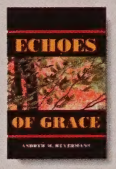
Large Post-It® Notes

Great for the office, or as gifts! 400 sheets, each with the Christian symbol. Each note is 2 3/4" x 2 3/4". Order code: **PS-D**, Cost: **$5.95** each/1-5, **$4.95** each/6+

Post-It® Notes

These **Post-It® Notes** come in pads of 50 sheets, each measuring 2 3/4" x 3". Order code **SS-P** (Pastor's Office) or **SS-C** (Church office). Cost: **$.60** each for 1-9, **$.50** each for 10+

Echoes of Grace



A 176 page collection of devotions by Andrew Weyermann, *Echoes of Grace* draws together the best of his shorter writings and includes powerful and inspiring messages for Christians in all seasons of life. Paperback, Order Code **WD-B**, Cost, **$7.95**, 3+ **$5.95**

Music for Easter

Bring the joyous music of Easter into your home, car or church through these crystal-clear digital recordings. These compact discs and audio cassettes offer beautifully performed selections of the Easter music.

Handel: The Messiah is performed by the Royal Philharmonic and Royal Choral Society. This 2 CD or cassette set has been captured in Digital Surround Sound. CD Order Code **CD-7**, Cost **$11.99**; Cassette Order Code **CS-7**, Cost **$7.99**

I Know that My Redeemer Lives is entirely instrumental and contains 10 selections including *Jesus Christ is Risen Today, O Sacred Head Now Wounded, I Know that My Redeemer Lives* and *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. CD Order Code **EH-D**, Cost **$9.98**; Cassette Order Code **EH-C**, Cost **$5.98**

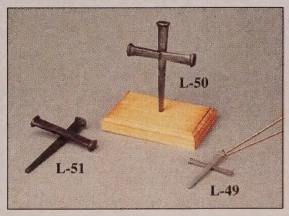
The Best of Bach includes selections from Bach's works including *Air for "G" String, Brandenburg Concertos* (selected movements), *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, performed by the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and others. CD Order Code **CD-9**, Cost **$5.95**; Cassette Order Code **CS-9**, Cost **$3.99**

Forget-Me-Nots

These festive 2.5" x 4" cards have an inspirational verse in calligraphy. Send with letters. Use them as bookmarks. Leave them to show love. 8 designs in a gift pack of 150. Order code: **FO-M**. Cost: **$4.95**

Square Nail Crosses

These crosses fashioned out of square nails serve as a unique reminder of the Christian faith.



This attractive square nail cross (3"x2") comes with a 24" steel **neck chain**. With its pewter-like finish it is ideal as a gift or award, or for acolytes or choir members.Order Code **L-49** Cost: **$3.25**/1-3, **$2.95**/4+

The large square nail **cross in wood** stands 4 1/2" high. Its finished wood base is 3" by 4 1/2". Makes a wonderful desk ornament. and a fine gift. Order Code **L-50**, Cost: **$5.95**/1-3, **$5.50**/4+

The large square nail **wall cross** is 4 1/2" high with a hanging bracket. Appropriate for office, classroom or home. Order Code **L-51**, Cost: **$5.95**/1-3, **$5.50**/4+

INDEX

Balloons
Easter 5
Pentecost 5
Sunday School 16

Bible Study 4, 9

Bookmarks
Lenten biblical 3
Father's Day 6
Mother's Day 6

Bulletins 19-21
Special bargains 21

Bulletin Inserts 3, 28, 29

Calendars 3, 5
Lent 3
Liturgical wall 5

Candles 9

Cards
Birthday 34, 40
Care Cards 37
Easter 38
Greeting 31, 32, 37
Parish occasions 17, 34, 35
Pew 29, 36

Cards (cont.)
Prayer 4, 13
Sunday school 17
Worship 13

Certificates 35, 36

Children/Youth
Activity Books 8
Lent/Easter 7
Arch Books 17
Devotional 7, 17
Games 19, 22
Hospital Cards 37
Sermon Resources 17
Teens 17

Clip Art 22, 30

Coin Holders 4, 7, 15, 19

Communion Regist. 29, 36

Computer Software 22

Creative Worship Resources . 30

Easter
Balloons 5
Cards 38

Easter (cont.)
Crosses 5
Litanies 16
Prayer card 2

Funeral 20-21, 28, 35

Games 21, 22

Hospital calls 29, 31, 37

Imprinted Material
**Ordering information .. 37
Balloons 17
Certificates 35, 36
Communion 29
Hospital 29, 37
Memorial 35
New Baby 34, 37
Parish Cards 34
Pew Cards 36
Stationery 33

Lent Devotional Booklets
Children's 7
Pocket Size 3, 4
Regular 2

Lent Services 5, 10
Weekly series 11-15

Letterhead 2, 20-22, 33

Litanies
Easter 5
Lent 4

Music
Audio-Kids 9, 16
Audio 9, 22, 39
Hymnals 28

Palm Crosses 5

Parish Service Pins 18

Pew Cards 29, 36

Pew Envelopes 28

Placemats
Potluck 22

Prayer Cards 2, 13

Prayer Pages 28

Services
Ash Wednesday 10

Services (cont.)
Children/Youth 10
Contemporary 28
Easter 10, 11
Good Friday 10, 11
Lenten Series 11-15
Maundy Thursday 10, 11

Song Books 11, 28

Stationery 31-33
Parish Occasion 34
Special Needs 31, 32

Table Tents 2, 29

Teacher Aids
Activity Books 8
Cards 16
Postcards 16
Rubber Stamps 16

Vacation Bible School 17

Videos 9, 23-27, 40

Wedding Resources 22, 30

Worship Cards 6

Bill & Ship To: _____

Attention: _____

Address: _____
(street address preferred)

City: _____ **State/Province:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Please give the name and phone number of the person making this order:

_____
(please print)

(AC) _____ / _____

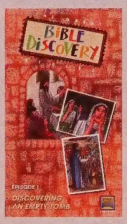
Quantity	Code	Description	Price	Amount
❑ Please send me the **FREE** VBS catalog (see page 17) and special discount coupon. Order Code **VB-C**			FREE	
❑ Please send the Easter video special *"Discovering the Empty Tomb" &"Easter Is"* Order Code **Y-57**			$18.90	
❑ Please send *"Discovering the Empty Tomb"* & a $2 coupon Order Code **Y-31**			$14.95	

General Ordering Information

Mail this order form to **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Or, call toll-free 1-800-325-9414 each weekday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (central time). Or, **Fax this order form**—1-314-821-9031. All U.S. orders are shipped promptly via UPS with an invoice enclosed in the package. Actual shipping and handling charges are extra and are added to the enclosed invoice. If you have any questions concerning your order please call toll-free at 1-800-325-9414. Orders for imprinted material cannot be taken over the phone. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

All prices in this catalog are in U.S. dollars. Canadian customers may pay in either U.S. or Canadian funds.

A SPECIAL VIDEO OFFER & MORE



Enjoy special savings when you order our new Easter video DISCOVERING THE EMPTY TOMB—the first in a series of Bible learning videos produced by Creative Communications.

This new series is designed not just to entertain young people but to help them learn great biblical truths. "Live action" and dissolve animation are featured in these videos. **They use Scriptural wording; are interactive, as the guide asks viewers questions; provide an interactive quiz after each story to challenge viewers to learn.**

"Discovering the Empty Tomb" focuses on Luke's Passion story from Palm Sunday to Christ's resurrection.
Cost $14.95 **Order Code Y-31**

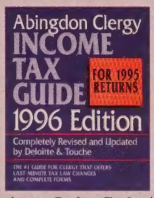
SPECIAL OFFERS!

Order both *"Discovering the Empty Tomb"* and *"Easter Is,"* a combined $27.90 value, for only **$18.90**. Order Code **Y-57**.

Order just *"Discovering the Empty Tomb"* for **$14.95** and receive a $2 coupon good on your next video purchase from Creative. Order Code **Y-31.**

EASTER IS

Frustrated by a school project, Benji is mean to his dog who runs away. Through this loss, the ultimate meaning of Easter becomes clearer to Benji. (25 min., VHS) Regular price $12.95-**Special $3.95 with purchase of our new Easter video.**



ABINGDON CLERGY INCOME TAX GUIDE

An all-in-one guide for clergy! Prepared and updated by one of the largest tax firms in the world, Deloitte Touche. For 1995 U.S. federal tax returns. Concise explanations of parsonage exclusion provisions and the form for self-employed clergy. Step-by-step instructions. Order Code **AT-X** Cost: **$11.95**

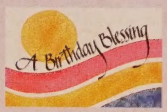
52 OPENING TALKS FOR CHILDREN

In this 64-page book author Eileen Ritter give teachers and pastors clever opening devotions that convey Bible truths to children. These 52 talks are suitable for day school chapel, Sunday School and VBS. They focus on Bible stories and Christian concepts as well as on the festivals of the church year and secular holidays. Appropriate for any denomination. Reproducible prayers and visual patterns are included. Large sized paperback. Cost: $**7.99** Order Code **OT-C**

Birthday Postcards for Church & Sunday School

These colorful postcards are ideal for your church's card ministry. Bright, cheerful art by Sally Beck makes these cards stand out. They let your members know you care. Two cards for adults, two for children. The 3 1/2" x 5 1/2" cards come in packs of 25. Cost: **$3.95**

SB-G



SB-J

SB-H

SB-K

Hooray! Today is Your Birthday. *Jesus and your friends at Sunday School are happy for you.* (For child) Order Code **SB-G**. ***Birthday Blessings.*** *"Your church family joins with you in saying thank you to Jesus for giving you the gift of life."* (For child) Order Code **SB-H**. ***A Birthday Blessing.*** *"God gave us the gift of you. We rejoice with you as you celebrate your birthday."* Order Code **SB-J**. ***Enjoy your special day.*** *"We share the joy of your special day, For God made you in a special way, And we are thankful."* Order Code **SB-K.**

the HIDING PLACE

A LENTEN DRAMA IN THREE SCENES

by

CLIFF MORRISON

THE HIDING PLACE

A LENTEN DRAMA IN THREE SCENES

by

CLIFF MORRISON

(December, 1992)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of first appearance)

JOHN.....the disciple whom Jesus loved
JUDAS.....the disciple who betrayed Jesus
SIMON, called PETER.....the "Big Fisherman", the disciple who denied Jesus
SOLDIER 1.....
SOLDIER 2.....soldiers in the Roman army
SERVANT GIRL.....a servant of the household of Caiaphas, the high priest
MAN 1.....
WOMAN.....
MAN2.....bystanders at the trial
VOICE of JESUS.....a voice on tape
PHILLIP.....a disciple of Jesus
ANDREW.....Peter's brother, a disciple of Jesus
OLD WOMAN.....
MAN 1.....
A PRIEST.....
MAN 2.....
WOMAN 2.....bystanders at the crucifixion
VOICE of CRIMINAL at L.....a voice on tape of one who was crucified with Jesus
VOICE of CRIMINAL at R.....a voice on tape of another who was crucified with Jesus
MARY the MOTHER.....the mother of Jesus
BarABBAS.....the one who was freed instead of Jesus
MARY of MAGDALA.....a friend of Jesus from whom He cast out seven demons
MARY of BETHANY.....a friend of Jesus and sister of Martha and Lazarus

Additional men and women may be used at the trial and crucifixion as desired.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1.
An upper room. Almost dawn on Friday after Passover, ca. 33 A.D.
Also, the courtyard of the house of Caiaphas, moments earlier.

SCENE 2.
The upper room. Noon, Friday. Jesus is on the cross.
Also, the site of the crucifixion at Golgotha.

SCENE 3.
The upper room. Later that evening.

A WORD ABOUT CHARACTER DOUBLING

Though there are 23 specific characters, three are voices on tape, and several others can be doubled. Only the actors playing the disciples, the three Marys, and BarAbbas must be exempt from doubling. The **minimum cast is 10 men and 5 women**. The following is a possible method of doubling:

a SOLDIER can double as the PRIEST
the SERVANT GIRL as the OLD WOMAN
MAN 1 and MAN 2 can be the same at the trial and at the crucifixion
WOMAN at the trial can become WOMAN 2 at the crucifixion

THE HIDING PLACE

A LENTEN DRAMA IN THREE SCENES

by

CLIFF MORRISON

SCENE 1

Almost dawn on Friday ca 33A.D.

JUDAS is alone on stage frantically searching for something. He is facing away from the door when it suddenly opens. Frightened, he turns to see a distraught JOHN entering. In the dim, pre-dawn light, John does not realize that it is JUDAS. Within a couple of seconds, he recognizes him and his distraught countenance changes to one of loathing.

JOHN: What are *you* doing here??

JUDAS: Never mind what I'm doing.

JOHN: You've got some nerve coming back here after what you've done!

JUDAS: John, I...I *had* to do it. At least I *thought* I had to do it.

JOHN: Why, Judas? Why?

JUDAS: I don't *know* why!!

JOHN: You *know* what's going to happen.

JUDAS: What do you mean?

JOHN: They're going to kill him. They'll crucify him before it's over with.

JUDAS: No, John! That wasn't the agreement!

JOHN: What agreement, Judas?

JUDAS: The one I made...(stops suddenly, realizing he has already said too much)

JOHN: What agreement??

JUDAS: The one I made with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

JOHN: (with great dismay) Oh-h-h-h, Judas! Are you a mad man? You, of *all* people, should know the Sanhedrin can't be trusted, *especially* Caiaphas!

JUDAS: I know.

JOHN: So why...?

JUDAS: (interrupting) Look! For the last three years, we've given up our families, we've lost all our friends, we've worn ourselves out travelling all over this region -- and for what?! Where is this great kingdom Jesus talked so much about? We have all believed for all this time that he would soon proclaim his kingdom. Where is it?

JOHN: (softening) I...

JUDAS: Well??

JOHN: I...don't really have an answer to that.

JUDAS: Don't you think you should? If anyone should?

JOHN: Why me? Why should *I* know more than any of the rest of you?

JUDAS: (a little sarcastic) Because, John, you're his *favorite.*

JOHN: What makes you say that?

JUDAS: Oh, come on, John! It's so obvious! You're *always* with him -- sometimes Peter and your brother James, too. But *you're* the one who is always closest to him. Even at our Passover celebration tonight! There you were with your head practically on Jesus' chest!

JOHN: It's just the way the tables and couches were set up. (He gestures with flattened hands) Jesus was here (left hand forward), and I was here (right hand perpendicular to left at heel of left hand) (becoming defensive) Peter was right here (right hand moves opposite left and parallel to it) and James was across from me!

JUDAS: (deliberately) James, Peter, John, and Jesus. That's what I'm saying! That's what it *always* is -- and *you,* John, are always the closest!

JOHN: Judas, don't tell me you betrayed him because of petty jealousy!

JUDAS: No, John. That wasn't even a consideration. I...I was tired, John. Tired of waiting. Tired of three years of promises. I thought...if I could maybe, somehow, force him into a corner, he would realize the time had come for him to proclaim his kingdom -- that the time had come for him to call down his angels and take control of Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and all of Rome. It still could happen.

JOHN: No, Judas, not now.

JUDAS: Of course it could! The whole idea was to get Caiaphas to arrest him and put him away for a while -- at least that's what I made Caiaphas *think* was the best solution. And he fell for it. He doesn't know Jesus' power. I'm telling you, Jesus will come to realize that he has to act now and when he does, it will be all over for Caiaphas and we'll be right there with Jesus -- on top of the world!

JOHN: Did you *really* think that would happen?

JUDAS: Of course I did!

JOHN: Then you don't know.

JUDAS: Know what?

JOHN: That Jesus spent the whole night at the home of Caiaphas. They've been holding a trial there all night.

JUDAS: Wait a minute! That's not legal!

JOHN: Of course it's not. Since when has Caiaphas even thought the law applied to himself? He *is* the law -- or so he thinks!

JUDAS: Look, John. I'm sure it's just a formality before they decide whether to put him in prison or exile him somewhere.

JOHN: Judas, you are so naive! That may be what you *hoped* would happen. It may be what Caiaphas *agreed* to. But I can tell you, Jesus will be on a cross before noon this afternoon!

(a rooster crows in the distance)

JUDAS: No, John!

JOHN: *YES !!*

JUDAS: How do you know?

JOHN: I got worried about Peter and the others, so I went searching for them. I went to the Temple first because I thought that's where they would take Jesus when they arrested him. But there was no one there except the guards on night watch. They told me to try Caiaphas' house. I went there and, sure enough, the place was as busy as the Jerusalem marketplace the day before Sabbath.

JUDAS: But that just proves my point. They had to go ahead with some sort of trial in order to put Jesus away for a while.

JOHN: Wait a minute, Judas. There's a *lot* more. I thought I spotted Peter warming his hands at the courtyard fire. I couldn't tell for sure. I didn't want to get too close to the guards --I didn't want to take a chance on being arrested myself. But as I was trying to get a better look, I overheard a couple of the Temple guards talking to a Roman soldier.

JUDAS: And?

JOHN: I'm sure I heard the Roman say something about alerting Pilate to get ready for a public trial some time after dawn. For all I know, Jesus may already be there.

(a second rooster crows)

The sun's coming up. Maybe we'll know something soon.

JUDAS: I just can't believe Caiaphas wouldn't keep his word. We made a bargain. We shook hands on it!

JOHN: A bargain! What *kind* of bargain? What did *you* get out of it?

JUDAS: (innocently) They paid me thirty pieces of silver. (lifting the money bag from his belt) Here it is. I'm putting it into our treasury.

JOHN: Thirty pieces of silver?? Judas! That's the price of a *slave* ! Don't you realize? You've just sold our Master to Caiaphas. And he will do whatever he wants. And I'm telling you -- Caiaphas wants Jesus *dead* !

JUDAS: That just can't be! It'll ruin everything! All my dreams! All my plans! But, John, don't you really think Jesus will assert himself before anything really bad happens? I mean, he *has* the power -- (doubting for the first time) doesn't he?

JOHN: *I* believe he does. When he has told us that he is the Son of God, I have always believed him. Who else could make the blind see and the lame get up and walk? Who else could have raised Lazarus from the dead? Or the daughter of that Roman soldier? I believe he has the power.

JUDAS: And don't you think he'll use it?

JOHN: That I don't know.

(The door opens and PETER enters out of breath and sobbing from having denied knowing Jesus)

JOHN: Peter! What's wrong? What's happened?

PETER: (Locking the door and leaning against it) I...I don't want to talk about it.

JUDAS: What have they done with Jesus?

PETER: (Not realizing who has asked the question, feigning innocence) How would I know?

JUDAS: Well, John just said he thought he saw you...

PETER: (Recognizing JUDAS, in a rage) *YOU!!* How dare you come back here?! (moving viciously toward JUDAS) How can you *dare* to show your face?? (choking JUDAS) *YOU* did this to him! Murdering scum!! They're going to crucify him and it's all your fault. You understand?? It's all your fault!!

JOHN: (moving in to separate them) Peter. *PETER!!* Get hold of yourself! Judas made an honest mistake! Believe me, his intentions were good!

PETER: (breaking away) Oh, *sure* ! Betraying our Master to be handed over to the Sanhedrin. What's good about that??

JUDAS: I thought they were just going to put him away for a while and that Jesus would not stand for it and would go ahead and call down his angels.

PETER: Well it didn't work out that way! They've just sent him to Pilate.

JOHN: Then -- it *was* you I saw in the courtyard at Caiaphas' house!

PETER: What are you talking about?

JOHN: After the arrest and we all scattered, I got worried about all of us. *And* I wanted to find out what was happening to Jesus. I was told that a trial was going on at Caiaphas' house. So I went there. I stayed outside the courtyard because I was afraid for myself, but I did look in. I *thought* I saw you standing by the fire.

PETER: (nervously) You...you must have been mistaken. I wasn't there.

JOHN: Then how do you know about them taking Jesus to Pilate?

PETER: I...uh...(PETER heaves a deep sigh and begins to sob) I can't keep lying. Oh, John, it was awful! He said I would do it. I didn't believe him. I thought I was stronger than that!

JUDAS: What are you talking about?

PETER: (as "fire" light comes up from floor at D.C.) I *was* there, John. (PETER begins to move D.C. to warm his hands over the "fire") I had followed Jesus from the moment the guards led him away from Gethsemane.

(Two Roman soldiers have gathered around the fire)

PETER: I had to find out what was going to happen. I put my cloak over my head (he does so) to help hide my face. I tried to be as much like the rest of the crowd as anyone else.

SOLDIER 1: Cold night for this time of year.

SOLDIER 2: That's for sure!

SOLDIER 1: How long you think this'll go on?

SOLDIER 2: Who knows? I've never been here before. They always do this sort of thing over at the Temple. And never at night.

SOLDIER 1: I wonder why they're doing *this* one at night? (noticing PETER) You're a Jew. Maybe you can tell me.

PETER: No, I really can't. You're right in saying they never hold a trial at night. Night trials are illegal according to our laws.

SOLDIER 2: So why this one? What's different about it from any other trial?

SOLDIER 1: Yeah! What's so unusual about this particular man? And why are *we* involved?

PETER: I don't know.

SOLDIER 1: I mean, this is a Jewish matter. Why can't you people handle these things yourselves?

PETER: (more deliberately) I don't know.

(A SERVANT GIRL of the household enters D.L. with a tray of simple goblets and a decanter of wine.)

GIRL: (to SOLDIERS) The High Priest thought this might help keep you warm.

SOLDIER 2: Hey! If *this* is how they do things here, I wouldn't mind coming back again!

SOLDIER 1: Can't argue with a cup of free wine!

GIRL: (seeing PETER) Sorry I can't offer you any. This is only for the soldiers.

PETER: That's all right. I don't want any.

GIRL: Say! Aren't you with *him* ?

PETER: What are you talking about?

GIRL: Aren't you one of his followers?

PETER: Who?

GIRL: The man they've got inside! Jesus of Nazareth! Aren't you part of his group?

PETER: I'm afraid you're mistaken. I don't even know him.

GIRL: Whatever you say. But I'm sure I've seen you with him before. (The SOLDIERS have emptied the decanter) I'll bring you some more wine. (SERVANT GIRL exits L.)

(A few other people have entered and are standing in small clusters talking among themselves. PETER moves away from the SOLDIERS to D.R.C. The SERVANT GIRL re-enters with a full decanter and goes to SOLDIERS)

GIRL: What happened to your friend?

SOLDIER 1: What friend? That big Jew?? (both SOLDIERS laugh)

GIRL: (coquettishly) Wait a minute. I'm a Jew. Don't you like me?

SOLDIER 2: (looking at her with *mild* lust) I have to admit you're a lot more attractive.

SOLDIER 1: (interested) Do you ever get any time off? Or do you work here all the time?

GIRL: (leaving and answering them over her shoulder with a wry smile) *ALL* the time!

(The SERVANT GIRL speaks to someone in one of the small clusters. She indicates PETER. They look. One person shrugs not knowing who he is. One or two nod in agreement that they have seen him with Jesus. SERVANT GIRL goes over to PETER again and looks at him. Then she speaks to the cluster from PETER's side.)

GIRL: I'm sure of it. This man was with Jesus and his other men.

PETER: (breaking away to D.L.) I don't know what you're talking about! I don't *know* the man!

(A rooster crow is heard. The SERVANT GIRL just shakes her head and exits L., U.S. of PETER. The SOLDIERS move away from the fire and exit after the SERVANT GIRL. PETER moves toward the fire. The cluster moves D.R.C to get a better look at him.)

MAN 1: The servant girl is right! You *are* one of his followers!

WOMAN: I know I've seen you with him.

MAN 2: Your voice gives you away. You're a Galilean, no doubt about it!

WOMAN: You're one of his men all right!

PETER: (extremely upset) I *swear*, I don't know this man you're talking about. In God's name, if I'm not telling the truth, may a curse fall on me!!

(a second rooster crows. All lights fade except fire. Cast exits leaving only PETER D.C. and JOHN and JUDAS in the darkness U.S. PETER looks upward in horror.)

VOICE OF JESUS: (on tape) Before the rooster crows twice, you will say three times that you don't know me.

PETER: (faintly, still looking up) Master...? (His glazed eyes fall slowly as he begins to sob) Master...? (He is struck with great guilt and grief as he staggers back from the fire.)

(Fire light goes out as lights inside the room come up again. We can now see that the sun is up.)

PETER: He said I would deny him. he said I would deny him three times before the rooster crowed twice. And I *did.* After I told him that I would *never* deny that I knew him.

JOHN: Peter! We *all* said the same thing.

PETER: But *I'm* the one who did it!

(PETER and JUDAS look at each other and see the guilt and horror in each other's eyes. They embrace in mutual understanding and consolation.)

JOHN: Peter, why don't you try to get some rest. I'm going to the Praetorium to see what I can of Pilate's trial.

JUDAS: (gently breaking the embrace) I'm leaving, too, Peter. Get some rest. We may all need your strength later.

(PETER can only sob as he pulls his cloak tighter around himself. JOHN and JUDAS exit together through the door. BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 2
After noon on Friday. JESUS is on the cross.

(PETER is attempting to rest on bench at L. ANDREW and PHILLIP enter from the door, talking.)

PHILLIP: *John said your brother was here.*

ANDREW: (motioning for quiet) He's supposed to be resting.

PETER: I'm here, Andrew. Who's that with you?

ANDREW: It's Phillip.

PETER: (sitting up and rubbing his eyes, neck, etc.) I guess I fell asleep.

ANDREW: Good. You needed some rest, Simon.

PETER: Any news?

ANDREW: Plenty!

PHILLIP: You knew they sent Jesus to Pilate.

PETER: Yes, that's when I came back here. I couldn't deal with any more of it. What happened?

PHILLIP: Pilate decided that since Jesus was a Jew and that this was really a question of our religion, he should be tried by Herod.

PETER: *HEROD?!* Herod keeps himself locked up in his palace. He doesn't even know what month it is!

ANDREW: Rumor has it that he even thought Jesus was John the Baptist come back from the dead.

PHILLIP: He tried to cover his fear by making fun of Jesus. And when Jesus didn't respond to any of his taunting, Herod grew tired of him and sent him back to Pilate.

PETER: I'm not surprised. What happened then?

ANDREW: You remember that Pilate has a standing gesture of "goodwill" every year at Passover.

PETER: When he releases a prisoner of the people's choice?

ANDREW: Yes.

PHILLIP: I was almost proud of Pilate. He did his best to show the people that there was no reason to punish Jesus any further -- that he had done nothing to deserve death.

ANDREW: But, by that time, the priests had stirred up such a mob that it became a shouting match. Every time that Pilate tried to convince them that Jesus had done nothing wrong, they just shouted louder.

PHILLIP: Finally, Pilate had an idea. He knew he was supposed to release one prisoner. He wanted to release Jesus. He even offered to flog him first as a token punishment, if that would help. But the crowd just kept on yelling. Then Pilate had Bar Abbas brought out.

ANDREW: I guess he thought that since Bar Abbas was a murderer and an insurrectionist and since the people were really afraid to have him free to kill again, surely, given the choice, they would let Pilate free Jesus and lock Bar Abbas away again.

PETER: That *was* a good idea.

PHILLIP: But it didn't work. You know how mobs can be. They were so stirred up they were in a frenzy. Nobody could reason with them. They were absolutely convinced that Jesus had to die.

PETER: And to think, less than a week ago, they were all shouting to make him a king. Who could forget all those palm branches and the people lining the streets shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!" (bitterly) Hosanna!! How could they change so quickly?!

ANDREW: (putting his hand on PETER's shoulder) Simon, I've asked myself that question over and over.

PETER: Do I guess Bar Abbas is a free man.

PHILLIIP: That's right.

PETER: And Jesus?

(ANDREW places both hands on PETER's shoulders and tries to speak, but he can't. His face turns to sorrow and bitterness. He can only turn away D.S. PETER looks at PHILLIP.)

PHILLIP: (after a deep breath) He's on a cross, Peter. They've nailed him to a cross! (PHILLIP almost breaks down)

(PETER can't find words to express his feelings. He can only turn away with great tension. PHILLIP moves up behind him and puts his hand on PETER's shoulder. In a moment lightens his grip and releases PETER and moves away.)

ANDREW: (turning toward PETER) Simon, I'm going back to Golgotha. The only one of us there is John. He is trying to take care of the women.

PHILLIP: I'm coming with you, Andrew. Peter?

PETER: (starting to follow, he stops and turns D.S.) I can't. I can't go.

PHILLIP: But why...?

ANDREW: I understand, Simon. John told me what happened.

PETER: After what happened last night, I can never look him in the face again.

(PHILLIP and ANDREW exit quietly through the door as lights cross-fade to D.S.area. People have gathered to watch JESUS die. They view the crosses as being D.S. over the front of the audience. There is at least one SOLDIER, two or three people who are there to taunt JESUS, MARY his MOTHER, MARY of MAGDALA, MARY of BETHANY, and JOHN. There may be others as space permits.)

OLD WOMAN: What's that sign above his head? I can't read it.

MAN 1: (looking up and squinting) It's in three different languages. Let's see -- it says, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews".

(general laughter)

A PRIEST: What kind of accusation is that? Pilate's out of his mind! It should read, "This man *said* I am the King of the Jews."

MAN 2: What does it matter now? He's as good as dead!

(more laughter)

WOMAN 2: I thought he said he would destroy the Temple and build it again in three days. Ha! He can't even get himself down off that cross!

MAN 1: He supposedly saved other people. If he *is* "God's Chosen One", why doesn't he save himself?

(still more laughter)

VOICE of JESUS: (on tape) God, my Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

PRIEST: Did you hear that?? He just called God his *father* ! More proof of his blasphemy!

(general angry reaction)

OLD WOMAN: Shh!! One of the others is saying something. I want to hear it!

VOICE of CRIMINAL at L: (on tape) You claim to be the Christ! If you are, then save yourself! And save us, too!

VOICE of CRIMINAL at R: (on tape) Be quiet! If you fear God, you'd better be careful what you say! You're getting the same punishment he is.

CRIMINAL at L: Fear God!! It's too late for that now!

CRIMINAL at R: We deserve our punishment; we *should* die for what we've done.

CRIMINAL at L: We should die for trying to free our people from the Romans??

CRIMINAL at R: We should die because we have murdered people. But this man has done nothing wrong! He's even *raised* the dead! (short pause) Jesus, please remember me when you come into your kingdom.

VOICE of JESUS: I tell you the truth. You will be with me in Paradise this very day.

(jeering from the crowd as they ease U.S. The WOMEN and JOHN come closer to the crosses)

MARY the MOTHER: How much longer can he suffer like this? John, I don't know how much more I can take!

JOHN: We must try to be strong, for his sake.

VOICE of JESUS: Mother. John will be your son now. John, she will be your Mother. Take care of her.

(MARY the MOTHER breaks down. The lights dim considerably. Brighter light seems to come from the cross of JESUS.)

VOICE of JESUS: Eloi! Eloi! Lama sabachthani?

MARY the MOTHER: (loudly to herself) "Lama sabachthani"?? John! He says God has even forsaken him! How could it be?? How?? (her voice fades into a moan)

(a rumble of thunder)

VOICE of JESUS: (loudly) It is finished! God, I place my spirit into Your hands.

(bright lightning and loud crackle and boom of thunder. The D.S area lights fade as the storm rises. Lights come up in the room as Judas enters frantically.)

PETER: Is it over, Judas?

JUDAS: For him. --- And soon for *me*. (he begins searching the room again)

PETER: What are you talking about?

JUDAS: (continuing his frantic search) He's *dead*, Peter. And everybody's blaming me. I guess it *is* my fault. And I just can't go on carrying the name "betrayer".

PETER: So what are you going to do?

(JUDAS finds the rope he has been searching for. He says nothing but holds the rope up in a clenched fist toward PETER. He looks at PETER for a moment, then runs toward the door.)

PETER: Judas, what are you doing?? (JUDAS is gone. PETER runs to the door, calling after him) Judas! Don't! It won't change anything!! *JUDAS!!!*

(PHILLIP and ANDREW enter. PETER lets them pass)

ANDREW: Let him go, Simon. He has to handle this his own way.

PETER: I can't say that I haven't thought about it myself.

PHILLIP: But just like you said, Peter, it won't change anything.

PETER: It would give me release form this torment! I don't know how *I* can go on knowing that, when he needed someone to speak up for him, I was *there* -- and I denied ever knowing him.

ANDREW: Simon, you're my own brother -- my *only* brother. I can sense something of what you're going through. And, believe me, you're not alone.

PETER: But *you* didn't stand outside in Caiaphas' courtyard and lie about knowing our Master!

ANDREW: No. Even worse. All the rest of us ran away and hid. We didn't even dare show our faces in public. At least you were there with him.

PETER: Oh, I was there -- but I wasn't with him.

ANDREW: But you were *there* -- which is more than the rest of us can say.

PHILLIP: And here we are, still hiding in *this* place. I just hope no one followed us here.

ANDREW: I don't think anyone would have bothered in the violence of that storm.

(There is a loud knocking at the door. PETER, PHILLIP, and ANDREW freeze)

PETER: (moving cautiously to the door) Who is it?

Bar ABBAS You don't know me -- maybe you know who I am. I followed two men here from Golgotha. I have to talk to them. Please! Please let me in.

(PETER, ever the compassionate one, opens the door. Bar ABBAS staggers in. He has had far too much wine.)

PETER: Who are you?

Bar ABBAS: My name may not be very pleasant to you.

ANDREW: What *is* your name?

Bar ABBAS: My name is the same as your dead Master's -- Jesus. But people who know me call me only by my last name -- Bar Abbas. (He takes a drink from his wine skin)

PETER: Haven't you had enough of that? (he tries to take it from Bar ABBAS)

Bar ABBAS: Hey!! Hands off! No. I haven't had enough -- not nearly enough.

PHILLIP: What do you want here?

Bar ABBAS: Something you have that I don't.

ANDREW: Look. If you came to rob us, then go ahead and try. But I think you can see, we have nothing.

Bar ABBAS: You have something, all right -- but it can't be bought -- or stolen. No. I didn't come to rob you.

PHILLIIP: So what do we have that you want?

Bar ABBAS: I never saw any of you men before today. I had never really seen your Master before this morning. But I'd heard of him. I've heard *all* about him. I've been hearing about this Jesus of Nazareth for months. Some of my men knew he didn't like the Romans or the Jewish government. They also knew that he had a reputation for having great powers. I wanted to get him to join with us to overthrow Herod, the Sanhedrin, and the Roman army.

PETER: You would have been wasting your time. He would never have helped you.

Bar ABBAS: I know that -- now. (takes another drink. The wine skin is empty. He lets the last drop fall to the floor and tosses the skin aside.)Today, when I finally got to see this man called Jesus of Nazareth, I couldn't believe it was the same man I had heard so much about. A man with that much power -- the ability to heal the sick and the blind, to cast out demons. I hear he even raised the dead. And what I can't understand is why a man with so much power that he could overthrow the world, spoke of only peace and love and willingly let himself be beaten and crucified.

PHILLIP: You *do* know a lot about him.

Bar ABBAS: Yes, I do. And I know that surely he must have taught you men a lot of what he knew -- even maybe gave you some of his power. And I want it --- Not the power --- after today, I'm through with that. The *peace*. That's what I want. And the love.

PETER: I don't know if, right now, we have any to give you.

ANDREW: What my brother means is that we've just today lost him and we don't exactly feel like sharing much peace or love.

Bar ABBAS: But he had plenty to spare. I saw it! I saw it in his eyes when he was before Pilate this morning -- how he just looked at him with so much pity and compassion. And then, when he was on the cross -- I heard him ask God to forgive the people who had done this to him. I've never been able to do that. Oh yeah! I even heard about last night when one of you cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant at Gethsemane.

PETER: That was me.

Bar ABBAS: What happened about that?

PETER: When they came to arrest Jesus, I became very defensive...

ANDREW: As usual.

PETER: *And I grabbed a sword from a guard and struck the servant and cut off his ear.* (Bar ABBAS winces as though he can feel it himself) And Jesus picked up the ear and just put it back on. It didn't even leave a scar.

Bar ABBAS: Humph! He healed a man's ear. (looking at the others in great emotional pain) He *died* for *me*!!! (he is breathing heavily to avoid crying) *I* should have been on that cross today. I should have died in place of him. Why? Why would he do that? Why would he die for me?

PETER: He died for *all* of us. I think I'm beginning to understand. He said it just last week. But I didn't pay much attention. It didn't seem to make much sense. I wish I could remember what he said.

PHILLIP: I remember. Every word. He told us that we were coming here to Jerusalem and that he would be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law and that they would call for his death. Then he said that they would give him over to the Gentiles and they would kill him on a cross.

ANDREW: And that's exactly what has happened. He knew all the time. And he tried to tell us.

PHILLIP: But he said something else. Remember?

PETER: What?

PHILLIP: The last thing he said about it was that on the third day after his death, he would be raised again!

ANDREW: I wish I could believe that.

Bar ABBAS: Why can't you?

ANDREW: Face it. People don't rise from the dead all by themselves.

Bar ABBAS: But he raised the dead!

ANDREW: I know, but...

Bar ABBAS: But what? I believe he'll do it! And if I believe it -- and I didn't even know him -- why can't you?

ANDREW: I'm afraid my faith is just not that strong right now.

PHILLIP: It's hard to have much faith when you've just watched the man who has been everything to you for so long be crucified by Roman soldiers.

Bar ABBAS: It's not over yet. I *know* it! Remember, I was there, too. I saw him draw his last breath. I heard his last cry. ----- And I saw the blackened sky and the bright lightening and felt every tremor of the earth deep in my bones. I felt God's own anger in that storm and I felt the power of Jesus' spirit exploding into the sky. It's not over. (shaking his head and looking around at the others) It's not over. (He starts out the door, not looking back) He's coming back. I know he is.

PETER: (after closing the door) I wish I was as sure as he is.

PHILLIP: He's so drunk. When you're that drunk, you'll believe anything.

ANDREW: You're right.

PETER: But Phillip, Andrew, everything else Jesus said has already happened. Why is it so hard for us to believe that he will come back like he said he would?

ANDREW: I don't know, Simon. But, somehow, I just can't believe it.

PHILLIP: I wish I *could.*

PETER: So do I. ------ So do I.

(Lights fade to BLACK)

SCENE 3.
Later that evening.

PETER, ANDREW, and PHILLIP are still there. PETER is pacing slowly. ANDREW and PHILLIP are sitting on the bench at L. The door rattles. There is a knock. All three men freeze. PETER goes to the door.

PETER: (peering through a crack) It's John and the women.

(PHILLIP and ANDREW heave a sigh of relief as PETER opens the door.)

PHILLIP: Every time someone comes to that door, I think it's the Romans come to take us away.

MARY of MAGDALA: Don't worry. I made sure that no one followed us here.

ANDREW: How can you be sure?

MARY of MAGDALA: You forget -- I know almost every soldier in Jerusalem. And you can be sure that any new ones I may not know have heard about me! The soldiers won't come here.

PETER: But Mary, your life changed a long time ago.

MARY of MAGDALA: *I* know that. ***You*** know that. But I still have a reputation and I can still use it when I need to.

JOHN: (to MARY the MOTHER) Don't you want to sit down? You must be exhausted.

MARY the MOTHER: I am, John. Thank you. (JOHN escorts her to the bench at L. and stays at her side)

JOHN: *Can I get you anything? Some wine?*

MARY the MOTHER: No. I'll be all right. (pause) I'm not sure I even believe that any of this really happened. It seems like --- like a dream. It doesn't seem real somehow. It's hard to believe that the Son I bore - whom God gave to me - the Son I watched everyday in Joseph's carpenter shop, the Son I saw grow into a man who loved people in a way no one else ever has --- it's hard to believe he's dead. Oh, how I cried when he left home the first time. I couldn't understand why he felt he had to go into the wilderness for forty days and nights. And then, when he came back, why he had to find a few men and start travelling so much. I always ***tried*** to understand. The angel told me of such things before he was born. And now he has left again. (pause) It's just hard to believe he's gone!

MARY of BETHANY: (going to MARY the MOTHER) I remember feeling that way when my brother Lazarus died. So empty. I remember being so upset with Jesus over Lazarus' death. I guess I was really angry with him for not coming immediately when he heard Lazarus was sick.

JOHN: But remember, he had a purpose in waiting.

MARY of BETHANY: Oh, I understand it all now. I understood the very moment we moved the stone away and Jesus stood at the entrance and called out, "Lazarus! Come forth!". If Jesus had come in time to prevent Lazarus from dying, he would have only proved that he was a good physician. But by waiting until my brother had been dead for four days, he proved that the power of Almighty God was truly in him.

MARY of MAGDALA: I knew that a long time ago. Some of you may remember that ***part*** of my reputation was due to having demons. Not just one or two. When Jesus found me, I was a wretch. Of course, I didn't know the reason for my tormented life. I didn't know anything about demons. I didn't know why I did some of the things I did. That was just the way my life went. Until the day I first saw Jesus. I don't remember if I was in one of my calmer moments, or if I was in some kind of rage, or if I was trying to come on to him, or whatever. What I ***do*** remember is that I felt so strange. It was like something was boiling up deep inside me. I remember that I felt someone's hands on my shoulders and I started to tremble. I felt the boiling rising up in me. Suddenly, I threw my head back and I shook violently seven times. And each time, I felt something rushing out of me. When it was all over, the first thing I saw was his face. It was the most beautiful face I had ever seen. And I remember feeling totally at peace --- for the first time in my miserable life. But, somehow, I knew ***that*** life was over and now I had a ***new*** life. (short pause) He gave me ---- my life.

MARY of BETHANY: He gave Lazarus ***his*** life.

MARY the MOTHER: And now he is dead. He saved so many others. He gave new life to so many people, only to lose his own. Why, John? Peter -- why?

PETER: They were afraid of him.

MARY the MOTHER: But why?

PETER: Mary, don't you see? People were following him. Thousands of people believed what he said and they were not following the authority of the Temple priests.

PHILLIP: It's simple, really. Caiaphas and the others were so scared that he would take all those people away from them and there would go their control, their prestige --- and their livelihood.

ANDREW: That was probably the biggest part of it. The loss of that many people would make a huge difference in the Temple treasury.

MARY the MOTHER: But he wasn't asking people to stop going to the Temple. He even ***taught*** in the Temple. How could they think such a thing?

PETER: He was too popular. Maybe the people were still coming to the Temple -- but not to listen to the priests. They were coming to hear Jesus.

JOHN: They also didn't like the fact that he made friends with common people and lepers and tax collectors and...

MARY of MAGDALA: ...and prostitutes!

JOHN: And prostitutes. They couldn't even handle the fact that he sat at dinner with rich and poor, and the just and unjust alike.

PHILLIP: I can't help but think, though, that what really did it for the priests was when we went to the Temple right after we arrived here in Jerusalem earlier this week.

PETER: You may be right. I was really proud of him that day. But the priests would have put him away right then if they could have.

ANDREW: They were already upset enough when they saw us coming over the crest of the Mount of Olives with so many people behind us.

PHILLIP: I was told that you could hear the shouts of "Hosanna!" at the city gates.

JOHN: That's what got the people here in Jerusalem so excited. They ***did*** hear the crowd with us and that's why they ran out of the city and cut down all those palm branches and joined in the procession and celebration.

ANDREW: The priests must have been in shock.

PETER: That must be why they left us alone when we got to the Temple. There was such a massive outpouring of support for Jesus, they didn't dare do anything to upset that kind of crowd.

PHILLIP: Even when Jesus started throwing down the tables of the money changers and letting loose all the animals and breaking open all the bird cages, they didn't do anything to stop him.

JOHN: Would you have tried to stop him -- or anyone in that kind of rage?

PHILLIP: Not me. I thought it was almost funny when all those caged birds were suddenly set free. It was bad enough that the sheep and cattle and other animals were already roaming around freely and blocking everybody's path. But when those birds suddenly took flight -- and the people panicked and tried to run -- all they could do was fall over each other trying to avoid being trampled by the animals.

PETER: And that's when Jesus grabbed a whip and began to drive them all out. I will never forget seeing him standing at the Temple gates after everyone was cleared out. He shook that whip at them and shouted, "The house of God shall be a house of prayer! But you have made it a den of thieves!!" What a sight!

MARY of MAGDALA: (soberly) But that was the beginning of the end.

(the group's energy quickly falls)

MARY of BETHANY: And now the end has come.

MARY of MAGDALA: And we have to try to get our lives in order.

JOHN: How can there be order in our lives without him?

MARY of BETHANY: I don't even want to think about it.

MARY of MAGDALA: But you ***have*** to think about it. You've got your sister and brother to think about as well.

MARY of BETHANY: Lazarus will be fine.

MARY of MAGDALA: Oh, really?? How can you be so sure?

MARY of BETHANY: He always gets over things easier than anyone else. He's very strong that way.

MARY of MAGDALA: How do you get over losing the person who brought you back from the dead?! Jesus didn't ***save*** Lazarus from death. Lazarus had already ***died***.

MARY of BETHANY: Mary, ***please...***

MARY of MAGDALA: Jesus brought him back to ***life*** !

MARY of BETHANY: Mary, not now! Please.

MARY of MAGDALA: Why ***not*** now? You've got to face it all some time. If not now, you'll have to eventually.

MARY of BETHANY: Right now, all I want to do is go home. I need Martha's strength.

MARY of MAGDALA: Martha's not as strong as you are, Mary.

MARY of BETHANY: What do you mean? My sister is the rock of the family.

MARY of MAGDALA: She only ***appears*** to be because she's always so busy keeping the house clean or fussing over meals. If she ever slowed down long enough to think about anything, she'd fall apart.

MARY of BETHANY: How can you say that??

MARY the MOTHER: (gently) It's true, Mary. No one knows the three of you better than I do. Martha and Lazarus need you now more than you can imagine. Lazarus only seems to get over things because he's so quiet. Martha seems strong because she's always busy and barking orders at you two. People who are as quiet as Lazarus just hold everything inside them. If you're not there to help him get it all out slowly, he'll explode. People like Martha, who are always doing busy work are just hiding behind their work. When she gets it done and has time to sit quietly, all of this will come back to her and she'll need you most of all then.

MARY of BETHANY: But what will I say to them?

MARY the MOTHER: *Just remember the things my Son said to you and say those things to* them.

MARY of BETHANY: I only hope I can.

MARY of MAGDALA: It's not going to be easy -- for you or any of us.

MARY the MOTHER: But you can do it! You'll ***have*** to do it for Lazarus' and Martha's sake.

MARY of BETHANY: (long pause) I want to go home now.

MARY of MAGDALA: It's so late. It's already the Sabbath. Why don't you stay here with one of us?

MARY of BETHANY: Bethany is only two miles from here. I'll be home in no time.

PETER: I'd feel better if one of us went with you.

MARY of BETHANY: I'll be all right.

ANDREW: But if anyone recognizes you as being a friend of our Master, there could be trouble.

PETER: That's why we're staying here in our little hiding place.

ANDREW: Let me go with you, Mary.

MARY of BETHANY: (pause) All right.(they start to exit)

ANDREW: (to the others) I'll be back later.

MARY the MOTHER: Be careful. Both of you.

ANDREW: We will. (they exit)

PHILLIP: We're all going to have to be careful now. Andrew was right. There may well be trouble.

JOHN: If anyone finds out that we're all hiding here, I wouldn't put it past Caiaphas to have us all arrested.

MARY of MAGDALA: Maybe we shouldn't all stay here. Maybe it would be better if we were not all in the same place.

PHILLIP: But how would we know if anything happened to one of us?

MARY of MAGDALA: I hear ***everything*** that's told on the streets. It won't be hard to find out.

JOHN: But what if something happens to you?

MARY of MAGDALA: (very self-assured) What's going to happen to me? I know too much. I've got something on almost everyone in the city. Besides, Mary and I have a lot to do before the Sabbath is over tomorrow evening.

MARY the MOTHER: ***What*** do we have to do?

MARY of MAGDALA: *The spices. We have to prepare the spices for his burial.*

MARY the MOTHER: Oh yes, of course.

MARY of MAGDALA: There just wasn't time for a proper burial before the Sabbath began.

MARY the MOTHER: And now there is all the time in the world. Oh, Mary! What am I going to do, now?

MARY of MAGDALA: What are any of us going to do?

JOHN: (to MARY the MOTHER) Since you are my mother now, you must come and live in my house. He would have wanted it that way.

PHILLIP: What are you talking about?

JOHN: While he was on the cross, Jesus told Mary that I was to be her son now and then he said to me, "She will be your mother. Take care of her." And that's just what I'm going to do. (to MARY the MOTHER) Tonight you will stay with her (indicating MARY of MAGDALA). I will stay here. And when the Sabbath is over, we will go to my house.

MARY the MOTHER: God's blessings on you, John.

MARY of MAGDALA: Shall we go, then?

MARY the MOTHER: Oh Mary, I know we must. It's our duty to prepare the burial spices. As his mother, it is particularly my duty. I just don't know if I'm ready.

MARY of MAGDALA: It's going to be difficult. There's no question about that. But we only have tomorrow and, right now, we all need rest.

MARY the MOTHER: I can't get the image of him on the cross out of my mind. As I watched him there, I remembered his whole life. I saw the manger where he slept the night he was born. And I remembered we had just gotten settled into a house when three astrologers came all the way from the Orient to bring him wonderful gifts. Then how we hurried off to Egypt to escape the murdering sword of Herod. The little carpenter shop in Nazareth where my Joseph taught him everything there is to know about working with wood. The time he disappeared from us here in Jerusalem and we found him ***teaching*** in the Temple when he was only twelve. (she looks up and out D.C.) But as all this passed before me in my mind, I saw him -- at each age -- (tears form in her eyes) hanging on that cross. (she brings her hands to her cheeks and speaks in a tearful moan) My baby....(she is sobbing) my little baby....nailed -- to a cross. And then ---- a spear ---- in his side! (Her eyes widen in horror as she remembers) ***Simeon!!*** (the others look at her questioningly)

Another memory. When we took him to the Temple, at the time of purification, to present him to God according to the law of Moses, a dear, old, righteous man named Simeon asked to hold him. He took him in his arms and praised God. He said, "Now, O God, You can let Your servant die in peace as You promised; for my eyes have seen Your salvation." Then he said to me, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed." Seeing the spear thrust into his side today brought it all back. Simeon's last words to me were, "And a sword will pierce your own soul also." (she sobs again) My Son ---- my Jesus ----. (slowly and in a moan) Oh God, he's dead ----. (she weeps bitterly but not loudly, never changing her position or focus -- just staring out above the audience until she closes her eyes and slowly drops her head.) What am I going to do? (she begins crying loudly -- she hasn't really let it all out until now)

(MARY of MAGDALA can only turn away D.R. trying to fight her tears with a bitter expression on her face. PHILLIP moves up behind her and puts his hands on her shoulders. She leans back into him as he tries to console her through his own tears. MARY the MOTHER has fallen into JOHN's arms. PETER moves to just above them and puts a big arm around each one. After a moment, MARY of MAGDALA pats PHILLIP on the hand and stands on her own. She moves a little toward MARY the MOTHER, JOHN, and PETER)

MARY of MAGDALA: We need to go. It's time.

MARY the MOTHER: Oh Mary, I don't know...

MARY of MAGDALA: (gently) It's time to go, Mary. We'll get through this. It's going to take time, but we'll make it --- together.

(MARY the MOTHER continues to sob softly. JOHN holds her by the shoulders at almost arm's length and lowers his head so that he can look more directly into her eyes)

JOHN: (quietly) Mary, ---- look at me. (MARY the MOTHER raises her eyes) It's over, Mary. It's finished.

PETER: We will have to adjust ourselves to a world with him left out.

(the LIGHTS fade slowly to BLACK)

THE END

** PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE**

This drama was written specifically to be presented on Good Friday. Though it may certainly be performed at any other time of the year, the story is purposefully incomplete. The resurrection has been deliberately left out in order to strengthen the feeling of loss and hopelessness following the crucifixion and burial. It is hoped that, after seeing this drama, the audience will feel that Easter Sunday not only will come, but that, now, it ***must*** come.

Spring Sale!
See inside for special savings for your church!

THE Seasonal CATALOG

Cokesbury

SPRING EASTER 1995

Church and Sunday School Resources & Supplies

Worship Bulletins

Worship & Preaching Resources

Plays & Programs

Tenebrae Resources

Books & Bibles

Hymnals

Candles

Confirmation Resources

Altar & Communionware

and Much, Much More!

A bulletin with this illustration is available in regular or large size.

Bulletins for Lent

LENTEN

"He was wounded for our transgressions." A01
SS5-014166. Regular size
SS4-014174. Large size

PALM SUNDAY

"From every corner a thousand voices sing . . . Hosanna to the King!"
SS5-014131. Regular size
SS5-01414X. Large size

Prices

Some bulletins are available in two sizes as noted. Regular size bulletins are 8½" x 11". Large size bulletins are 8½" x 14". A01

Regular size
100 for $6.25
500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Large size
100 for $7.25
500 for $30.00; 1000 for $54.00

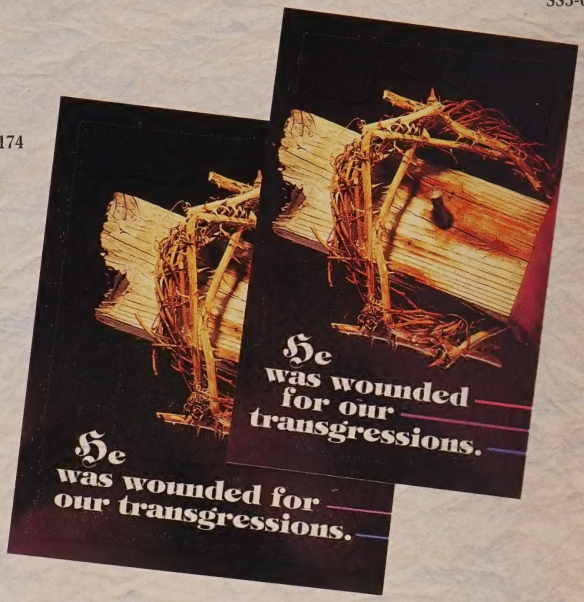
Sanctuary for Lent 1995

by Steven K. Brown

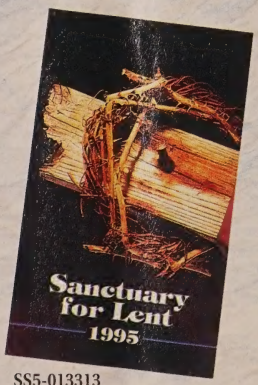
Daily devotions to inspire and encourage church members during the Lent/Easter season. Each devotion begins with a Scripture reading and ends with a prayer. Buy one for every family in your church!
(Featured on back cover.)
SS5-013313. Each, **40¢**; 100 for **$40.00**

SS5-014166

SS4-014174



SS5-014131



SS5-013313

SS5-01414X

Easter Bulletins

COMMUNION

"One bread, one body, one Lord of all." A01
SS5-014182. Regular size

GOOD FRIDAY

"It is finished." A01
SS5-014190. Regular size

SUNRISE

"He is not here, but has risen."
SS5-014204. Regular size

RESURRECTION

SS5-004357. Large size

ALLELUIA

SS5-004292. Regular size
SS5-004306. Large size

Matching letterhead and offering envelope shown on page 6.

Prices

Some bulletins are available in two sizes as noted. Regular size bulletins are 8½" x 11". Large size bulletins are 8½" x 14". A01

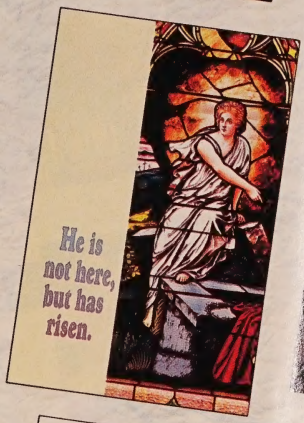
Regular size
100 for $6.25
500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Large size
100 for $7.25
500 for $30.00; 1000 for $54.00

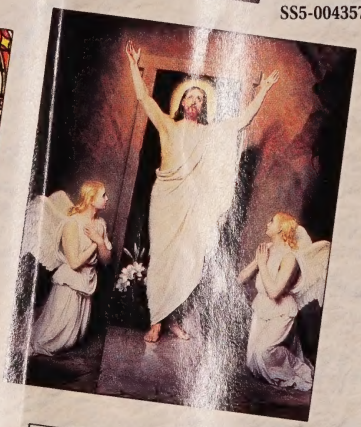
SS5-014182

SS5-014190

SS5-014204



SS5-004357



SS5-004292

SS5-004306.

Easter Matching Sets

Coordinate your church's Easter activities with matching sets of bulletins, letterheads, and offering envelopes. You can choose from three different sets (pages 4–6), each with a choice of regular or large size bulletins!

EASTER LILY

Alleluia!
SS5-01400X. Regular size bulletin. A01

SS5-014018. Large size bulletin. A01

SS5-014026. Letterhead. A01

SS5-014034. Offering envelope. Space for donor to write name and address. A01

SS5-04247X. #10 mailing envelope with die cut window to let illustration on letterhead show through

Prices

Regular size bulletins. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Large size bulletins. 8½" x 14".
100 for $7.25; 500 for $30.00; 1000 for $54.00

Letterhead. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Offering Envelopes. 6¼" x 3⅛".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

#10 Mailing Envelope. 8⅞" x 4⅞". A01
100 for $6.95; 500 for $25.95; 1000 for $49.50

SS5-014018

SS5-01400X

SS5-014026

SS5-014034.

Easter Matching Sets

DOGWOOD

"All Creation is Reborn."
SS5-014042. Regular size bulletin. A01

SS5-014050. Large size bulletin. A01

SS5-014069. Letterhead. A01

SS5-014077. Offering envelope. Space for donor to write name and address. A01

SS5-04247X. #10 mailing envelope with die cut window to let illustration on letterhead show through

Prices

Regular size bulletins. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Large size bulletins. 8½" x 14".
100 for $7.25; 500 for $30.00; 1000 for $54.00

Letterhead. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Offering Envelopes. 6¼" x 3⅛".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

#10 Mailing Envelope. 8⅞" x 4⅞". A01
100 for $6.95; 500 for $25.95; 1000 for $49.50

CALL OR VISIT YOUR COKESBURY STORE, OR ORDER TOLL FREE: 1-800-672-1789

SS5-014042

SS5-014050

SS5-014069

SS5-014077

Easter Matching Sets

CHRIST THE LORD

"Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!"

SS5-004314. Regular size bulletin. A01

SS5-004322. Large size bulletin. A01

SS5-004330. Letterhead. Also matches "Alleluia" bulletin shown on page 3. A01

SS5-004349. Offering envelope. Space for donor to write name and address. Also matches "Alleluia" bulletin shown on page 3. A01

SS5-04247X. #10 mailing envelope with die cut window to let illustration on letterhead show through

Prices

Regular size bulletins. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Large size bulletins. 8½" x 14".
100 for $7.25; 500 for $30.00; 1000 for $54.00

Letterhead. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

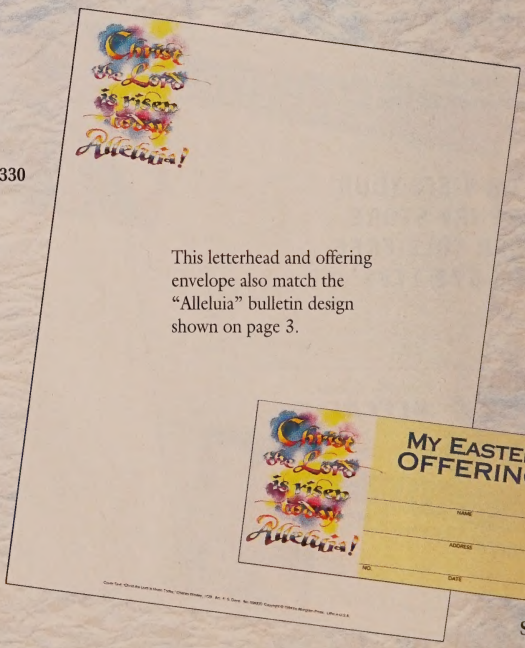
Offering Envelopes. 6¼" x 3⅛".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

#10 Mailing Envelope. 8⅞" x 4⅞". A01
100 for $6.95; 500 for $25.95; 1000 for $49.50

SS5-004322

SS5-004314

SS5-004330



This letterhead and offering envelope also match the "Alleluia" bulletin design shown on page 3.

SS5-004349

MAILING ENVELOPE

Classic white envelope with a die-cut window to let the full-color artwork on your Easter letterhead show through.
8⅞" X 4⅞".A01
SS5-04247X. 100 FOR $6.95
500 FOR $25.95; 1000 FOR $49.50

Bulletins for Special Days

PENTECOST

"I will pour out my spirit."
SS5-047382. Regular Size

"Born of the Spirit"
SS5-014255. Regular Size

MOTHER'S DAY

"Love never ends."
SS5-047498. Regular Size
SS5-04751X. Large Size

FATHER'S DAY

SS5-047471. Regular Size

Prices

Regular size bulletins. 8½" x 11".
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

Large size bulletins. 8½" x 14".
100 for $7.25; 500 for $30.00; 1000 for $54.00

SS5-047382

SS5-014255

SS5-04751X

SS5-047498.

SS5-047471

Special Bulletins

DEAF AWARENESS

"Listen to the sound of silence, and in it, hear God's voice."
SS5-014239. Regular size

RALLY DAY

SS5-014247. Regular size

ORDINATION

"I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service."
SS5-047455. Regular size

MINISTRY

"I stand here, testifying to both small and great."
SS5-047463. Regular size

WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED

"When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there."
SS5-014212. Regular size

Prices

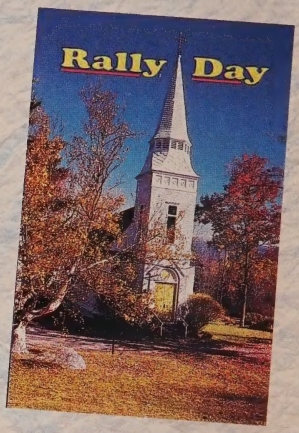
Regular size bulletins.
8½" x 11". A01
100 for $6.25; 500 for $27.00; 1000 for $49.00

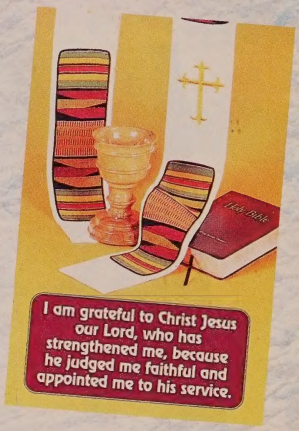
For a complete selection of General Worship Bulletins, see pages 38-44 of The Cokesbury Catalog 1994-1995 *or ask for a copy of Cokesbury's* WordAlive! Bulletin Subscription Services *catalog.*

CALL OR VISIT YOUR COKESBURY STORE, OR ORDER TOLL FREE: 1-800-672-1789

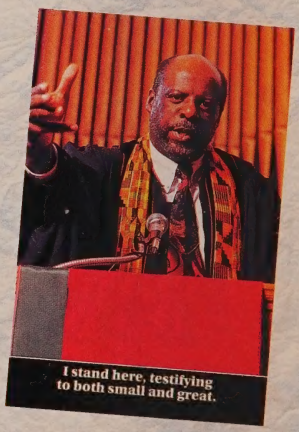
SS5-014239

SS5-014247

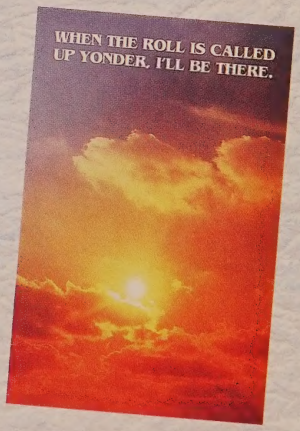




SS5-047455



SS5-047463



SS5-014212

COKESBURY FUND RAISING PROGRAM

If your church needs new choir robes, pews, or other items, but doesn't have the extra funds, Cokesbury's Fund Raising Program can help you raise the money you need.

There is no risk! Easy-to-sell items offer high sales/high profits. And you need no money to get started!

- **Candles** — Many sizes, colors, and scents!
- **Boxed Greeting Cards** — Birthday, Get Well, Thank You, Cheer, Encouragement, and All Occasion cards, plus a wonderful selection of Christmas cards!
- **China** — Commemorative plates, cups, saucers, teapots, salt and pepper shakers, ornaments, mugs, and more!
- **Magnets** — 12 different Hold-A-Note designs, each with a special message.

You don't pay until *after* delivery — and Cokesbury will pay shipping and handling for you. We guarantee your satisfaction!

Ask for free Fund Raising Packet SS5-521535

COIN COLLECTORS (Gleaners)

A. $10 Lenten Coin Folder

Full-color folder with seasonal message. Folds to 5⅝" x 6¾". Holds quarters. P14
SS5-530313. 50 for $20.00; 100 for $38.00

B. $15 Lenten Coin Folder

Full-color with inspirational message that will encourage generous giving. Folds to 4¼" x 9⅜". Holds quarters. Space for amount, name, address, and envelope number. P14
SS5-346701. 50 for $25.00; 100 for $48.00

C. Older Children's $4 Lenten Coin Folder

Full-color seasonal illustration. Folds to 4⅝" x 6¾". Holds $4 in dimes. P14
SS5-346687. 50 for $13.00; 100 for $24.00

D. Young Children's $2.00 Lenten Coin Folder

Coin folder holds $2.00 in dimes. Folds to 3½" x 4½". P14
SS5-202380. 50 of same design for $8.50; 100 of same design for $15.00

Blank Coin Folder

Holds $10 in quarters plus currency and checks. Blank cover. Folds to 5⅝" x 6¾". P14
SS5-197987. 100 for $27.00

Plain White Mailing Envelopes

6" x 7¾". For 5⅝" x 6¾" folder. P14
SS5-197998. 100 for $3.75
4¾" x 11". For 4¼" x 9⅝ folder.
SS5-548831. 100 for $5.00

OFFERING BOX

E. My Lenten Offering Box

Colorful box encourages giving. Space for name, address, number on back of box. 3⅞" x 2" x 1⅝". P14
SS5-346654. 50 for $8.00; 100 for $14.00

OFFERING ENVELOPES

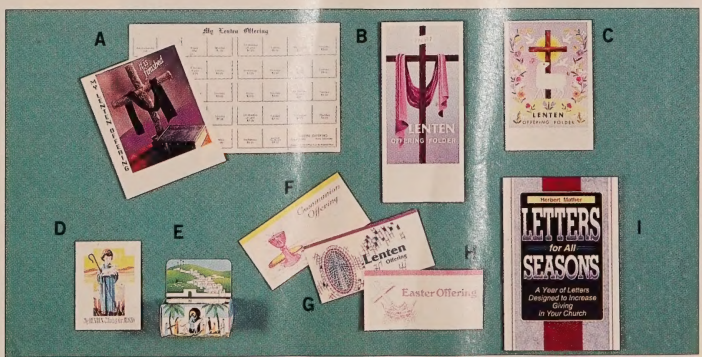
F-H. Seasonal Offering Envelopes

Fine white envelopes printed with colors and designs that accent the season. 3⅛" x 6¼". Minimum order: 100 of same design. D11
100 of same design for $4.15;
500 of same design for $16.55;
1000 of same design for $30.00
F. SS5-034403. Communion
G. SS5-021183. Lenten
H. SS5-021194. Easter

STEWARDSHIP LETTERS

I. Letters for All Seasons: A Year of Letters Designed to Increase Giving in Your Church

Herb Mather offers a wide selection of sample letters designed to help pastors, stewardship chairpersons, and other church leaders inform the congregation about stewardship matters and financial commitments in ways that will encourage church members to give boldly.
SS5-393434. $6.95



Lenten Resources

Easter Is Jesus, *by Darcy James.* These stories and activities furnish visible reminders of the events of salvation. Includes projects for the season of preparation and Easter. A01
SS5-114802. Paper, **$6.75**

Remember and Rejoice: Reflections and Activities for Lent Through Easter, *by Sue Kirk and Sally Wilke.* Explains the history and customs of the seasons and provides suggestions for reading and reflection, spiritual disciplines, cooking, crafts, and games to help observe Lent and Easter. A09
SS5-371432. Paper, **$4.99**

Eucharist: Christ's Feast With the Church, *by Laurence Hull Stookey.* Provides a clear historical and theological overview of the Lord's Supper in a style that is "popular" rather than academically heavy. A01
SS5-120179. Paper, **$13.95**

Also by Laurence Hull Stookey:
Baptism: Christ's Act in the Church
SS5-023645. Paper, **$13.95**

Walk With Jesus: Resources for Holy Week, *by Steve Petty.* These Easter/Holy Week devotions help Christian leaders discover the deepest meaning of the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and other critical Holy Week events. Includes daily meditations and prayers. A01
SS5-44005X. Paper, **$2.95**

Time for a Change of Heart: A Calendar of Devotional Activities for Lent and Easter 1995. This new Lenten calendar features real people acting on their faith in familiar situations. Daily activities help church members reflect on the Easter story and what it means for us today. 8½" x 11". B22
SS5-536365. Paper, **each, $1.00; 10 for $8.00**

The Workbook on the Christian Walk, *by Maxie Dunnam.* This seven-week Lenten study of Christian discipleship includes daily readings and exercises for study and meditation. A01
SS5-613701. Paper, **$7.95**

Lilies of the Field: Meditations for the Church Year, *by Wang Weifan.* Includes 62 readings reflecting the Western spiritual writers and the Chinese cultural tradition— one for each week of the Christian Year beginning with Advent, and daily readings for Holy Week. A01
SS5-606527. Paper, **$7.95**

The Upper Room Disciplines 1995. Each of 53 writers gives a week of inspiring meditations centered on Scripture from the Revised Common Lectionary. The lections are read and studied during the week leading up to their appointed Sunday in the Lectionary. A01
SS5-60267X. Paper, **$6.95**

Journeying Through the Days 1995: A Calendar & Journal for Personal Reflection. *Introduction by Rueben Job.* This popular calendar and journal contains 53 beautiful, full-color photos by well-known photographers from across the country. Each photo is accompanied by a thought-provoking excerpt from a variety of classic and contemporary writers. Spiral binding. A01
SS5-60575X. Paper, **$12.95**

Sanctuary for Lent 1995. Daily devotions to inspire and encourage church members during the Lent/Easter season. Each devotion begins with a Scripture reading and ends with a prayer. Buy one for every family in your church! (Featured on back cover.)
SS5-013313. Each, 40¢; 100 for $40.00

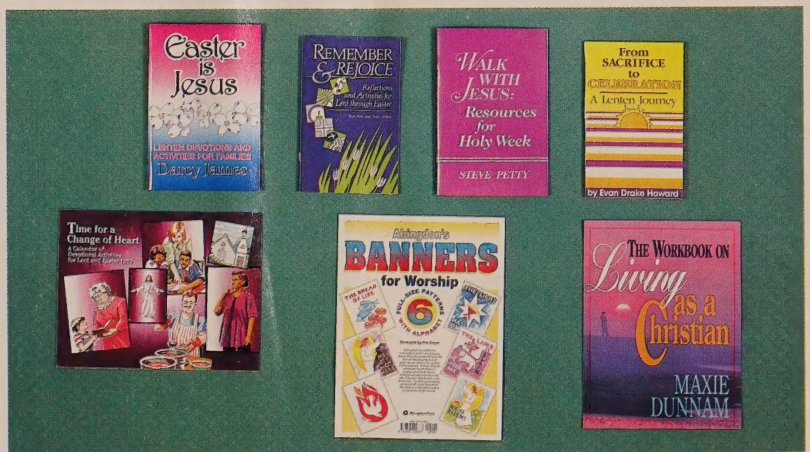
From Sacrifice to Celebration: A Lenten Study, *by Evan Drake Howard.* Journey with New Testament persons as they find freedom and renewal by forming the same kind of spiritual bond with Christ that he had formed with God. J03
SS5-459767. Paper, **$9.00**

Programs for Lent and Easter, Vol. 3, *edited by Elizabeth Wright Gale.* Ideas for helping congregations discover new meaning in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, plus celebrations for Pentecost. J03
SS5-351547. Paper, **$9.00**

Fifteen Services for Small Churches, *by V. Elaine Strawn and Christine Nees.* Fifteen services designed to make the most of the resources of small congregations, gatherings, and study groups.
SS5-129893. Each, **$6.95**

Abingdon's Banners for Worship. Full-size patterns and instructions for making six banners, with letter patterns for the complete alphabet. Encourages creative participation in the worship experience.
SS5-002885. Each, **$11.95**

The Workbook on Living as a Christian, *by Maxie Dunnam.* This seven-week, daily program is designed to strengthen your relationship with Jesus. Through reading, reflection, and recording your own thoughts, you will learn that Christianity involves not only doctrine but relationships, emotions, values, and commitment.
SS5-00313X. Each, **$7.95**



The Lectionary Bible.
The text of the NRSV is printed out in blocks according to the standard lections of the Revised Common Lectionary. Covers the three-year cycle in one volume. Spiral bound with larger type for ease of use in public reading. *Abingdon.* A01
SS5-213312. Paper, $24.95

Prayers for One Voice: 180 Prayers Based on the Revised Common Lectionary.
by Everett Tilson and Phyllis Cole. Scripture comes alive in these creative and inviting prayers based on the Revised Common Lectionary. One for each Sunday in the three-year cycle. *Abingdon.* A01
SS5-303397. Paper, $12.95

The Revised Common Lectionary: The Consultation on Common Texts.
Contains a complete three-year listing of the Lectionary (A, B, C) to guide Scripture reading on the Lord's Day. *Abingdon.* A01
SS5-361745. Paper, $12.95

Litanies and Other Prayers for the Revised Common Lectionary: Year C.
by Phyllis Cole and Everett Tilson. This resource includes Invocation, Call to Worship, Litany Prayer for One Voice, and Benediction for each Sunday in the Christian Year. The authors bring biblical and contemporary images and ideas together in a powerful expression of faith in this "dialogue with Scripture." *Abingdon.* A01
SS5-221226. Paper, $13.95

Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary—Year C: Lent/Easter.
by Marion Soards (New Testament), Thomas Dozeman (Old Testament), and Kendall McCabe (Liturgy). Offers preachers extensive liturgical advice for worship planning. Each volume begins with a chapter on the theological meaning of the season, its relation to the overall Christian Year, and specific liturgical suggestions for the season. For each Sunday and special day of the year, the books show how the focus on the church year can be integrated through worship, music, color, and the proclamation of the Word. *Abingdon.* A01
SS5-338050. Paper, $9.95

Also available in the *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary* series, Year C:

After Pentecost 1
SS5-338069. Paper, $9.95

After Pentecost 2
SS5-338077. Paper, $9.95

Advent/Christmas/Epiphany
SS5-338042. Paper, $9.95

The United Methodist Book of Worship.
An invaluable book of liturgy, prayer, services, and service music arranged by the Christian Year. This "exhaustive" collection contains 560 pages of valuable worship resource material! *Abingdon.* A01

Regular (Hardcover) Edition
SS5-035724. Black, $24.95

Genuine Leather Edition
SS5-035732. $49.95

Accompaniment (Keyboard) Edition
SS5-035740. $9.95

***NEW!* The Abingdon Preaching Annual, 1996.**
compiled and edited by Michael Duduit, editor of Preaching *magazine.* Easy-to-use format and outstanding features! Three sermon briefs for each Sunday, pastoral prayers and calls to worship based on a Psalm, weekly worship theme, and much more. A01
SS5-001218. $19.95

The Storyteller's Companion to the Bible.
edited by Michael E. Williams. How to retell Bible stories effectively. A01. Each, $15.95

SS5-396700. Vol. 1: Genesis
SS5-396719. Vol. 2: Exodus-Joshua
SS5-396727. Vol. 3: Judges-Kings
SS5-396743. Vol. 4: Old Testament Women
SS5-396751. Vol. 5: Old Testament Wisdom
SS5-00120X. Vol. 7: The Prophets II

Preaching in Two Voices: Sermons on the Women in Jesus' Life.
by William D. Watley and Susan D. Johnson Cook. 16 sermons combine the scriptural insights of a female pastor and a male pastor's vision. 103
SS5-315505. Paper, $10.00

New Preaching and Worship Software!

Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary.
Year C, Each, $44.95
SS5-014328. DOS 3.5"
SS5-014336. DOS 5.25"
SS5-014344. Windows

Complete Set: Years A, B, & C, $119.95
SS5-014352. DOS 3.5"
SS5-014360. DOS 5.25"
SS5-014379. Windows

The Abingdon Preaching Annual, 1996.
SS5-001226. DOS 3.5" $29.95
SS5-001234. DOS 5.25" $29.95
SS5-001242. Windows $29.95

The United Methodist Book of Worship.
SS5-431198. DOS 3.5" $79.95
SS5-010500. DOS 5.25" $79.95
SS5-010535. Windows $79.95

The United Methodist Hymnal.
SS5-010578. DOS 3.5" $149.95
SS5-010586. DOS 5.25" $149.95

Bibles

A. Cokesbury NRSV Children's Bible. Illustrated Bible stories and characters accompanied by full-color study helps. C08. Each, **$14.95**
SS5-303440. Red letter
SS5-303507. Black letter

B. Cokesbury NRSV Classroom Edition. Paperback. The lowest priced NRSV Bible available anywhere. 5 3/16" x 7¾". C08
SS5-269910. Each, **$5.95**

C. Cokesbury NRSV Gift Bible. Regular Edition. Ideal for teachers and students of all ages. 32 pages of study helps. 5 3/16" x 7¾". C08

Imitation Leather. Each, **$10.95**
Red Letter Edition
SS5-277247. Black
SS5-277258. Blue
SS5-277236. Burgundy
Black Letter Edition
SS5-294140. Black

Bonded Leather: Red Letter
C08. Each, **$21.95**
SS5-277260. Burgundy
SS5-277271. Black

Imitation Leather:
With Apocrypha. C08
Each, **$12.95**
Red Letter Edition
SS5-277282. Burgundy
SS5-277305. Black
SS5-277293. Blue
Black Letter Edition
SS5-294264. Black

Genuine Leather:
With Apocrypha. C08
SS5-285351. $36.95

Bible Bookplates. Two-color. Crack-and-peel backing. 3" x 4". A01

United Methodist. Pkg. of 50, **$6.00**
SS5-03633X. "This Bible presented for the glory of God to _____ from _____."
SS5-036313. "This Bible presented for the glory of God in memory of _____."
SS5-036321. "This Bible presented for the glory of God in honor of _____."

General. Pkg. of 50, **$6.75**
SS5-037921. "Bible presented to _____ in memory of _____."
SS5-037913. "Bible presented to _____ by _____."

D. Cokesbury NRSV UltraThin Reference Bible. Only 5⅝" x 8½" x ⅝" thick, yet has clear, readable type on finest quality India paper. Features include Cokesbury Bible study helps, center-column references, concordance, presentation page with family record section, and full-color maps. Red letter edition. C08
Special Values—while supplies last!
Bonded Leather
Each, **$9.50,** *compare elsewhere at $39.99!*
SS5-294138. Black
SS5-294195. Blue
SS5-294253. Burgundy
SS5-294311. Gray

Genuine Leather
Each, **$13.98,** *compare elsewhere at $49.99!*
SS5-293590. Black
SS5-293657. Blue
SS5-293772. Burgundy

E. Cokesbury NRSV Pew Bible. Each, **$9.50**
Save 30% on purchase of 100 or more copies—Only $6.65 each!
United Methodist Edition.
SS5-232980. Navy blue
SS5-232991. Dark red
SS5-269998. Bright red
SS5-268208. Purple

"Holy Bible" Edition.
SS5-277214. Navy blue
SS5-277225. Dark red

F. Cokesbury NRSV Large-print Pew Bible. Each, **$15.95**

United Methodist Edition.
SS5-269921. Navy blue
SS5-269965. Dark red
SS5-269943. Bright red

"Holy Bible" Edition.
SS5-294798. Navy blue
SS5-294856. Dark red

IMPRINTING. All Bible editions (except paperback) can be beautifully imprinted in gold on the cover. Put your personal name, or church name, on each edition at a low cost! One imprinting line includes 35 total characters (including letters, spaces, and punctuation marks as characters). To insure accurate imprinting, please submit names typed or handprinted carefully.

Cost for Standard Imprinting:
1 copy: $3.00 each per line
2-24 copies (same name): $2.00 each per line
25 or more copies (same name): $1.50 each

Bibles

A. The New Oxford Annotated Bible: NRSV. Completely revised and enlarged, this ecumenical study Bible contains many outstanding features. N05

Clothbound
Regular Edition
SS5-303201. $27.95
With Apocrypha
SS5-303267. $26.95

Genuine Leather
Regular Edition
Each, **$44.95**
SS5-501971. Black
SS5-501982. Burgundy
With Apocrypha
Each, **$52.95**
SS5-501993. Black
SS5-502007. Burgundy

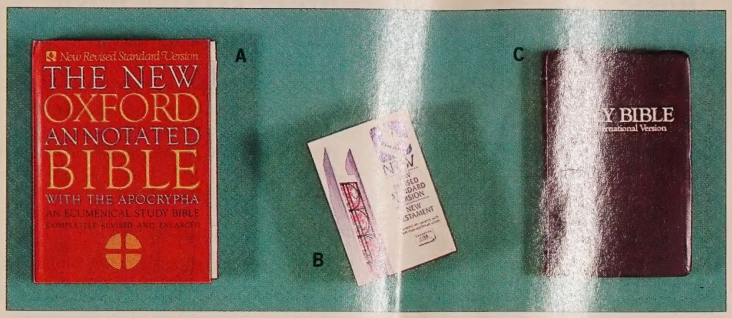
B. NRSV New Testament on Cassette. The complete New Testament narrated with male and female voices on 12 audiocassettes. Ideal for car, office, and home. *World Bible.* R09
SS5-345262. $14.97

New Layman's Parallel Bible. Allows the reader to compare the King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the New International Version, and the Living Bible, all juxtaposed in parallel columns on facing pages. X01
SS5-304078. $45.99

C. Cokesbury NIV Gift Bible.
Imitation Leather Binding. C08. Each, **$12.95**
SS5-232455. Blue
SS5-232466. Black
SS5-232477. Burgundy

D. Cokesbury Good News Gift Bible (TEV). **Hardcover.** C08
SS5-170421. Each, **$9.50**
Burgundy Simulated Leather Binding
SS5-442005. Each, **$11.95**

The Concise Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version. *John R. Kohlenberger III, editor.* An invaluable, up-to-date reference resource. It's larger and more comprehensive than earlier concise concordances, and it's priced affordably, too! *Oxford.* N05
SS5-440382. Hardcover, **$12.95**



Gospel Parallels: NRSV Edition. *by Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr.* More reliable than a harmony of the Gospels. Compares and contrasts the Synoptic Gospels by aligning them side by side. *Nelson.*
SS5-298273. $19.99

E. NIV Paperback Bible. Features clear type, easy-to-read paragraph style of the NIV, contemporary language bringing the Bible to life, and a preface explaining the NIV translation. *Nelson.*
SS5-460163. $4.99

F. The Original African Heritage Study Bible: KJV. *edited by Cain Hope Felder.* Of the many Bible editions on today's market, this is the only one that details and documents Africa's contribution to the formation of Judaism and Christianity. The KJV is supplemented with over 1000 annotated footnotes. *Winston-Derek.*
SS5-488430. Cloth, **$39.99**
SS5-488554. Black Leather, **$59.99**
SS5-488678. Burgundy Leather, **$59.99**

G. *New!* Vinyl Bible Case. Protect your Bible with a new Bible case. Designed for convenience, style, and durability. Front Pocket. Zipper. G29. Each, **$13.95**
SS5-446195. Navy, medium
SS5-446184. Navy, large
SS5-446173. Navy, XL
SS5-446151. Burgundy, medium
SS5-446140. Burgundy, large
SS5-446138. Burgundy, XL
SS5-446116. Black, medium
SS5-446105. Black, large
SS5-446093. Black, XL

Medium size fits Bibles 9" x 6" x 1¾". Large fits Bibles 9½" x 6½" x 1¾". XL fits Bibles 10" x 7" x 2".

For other styles of Bible cases, see page 11 of the 1994-95 Cokesbury Catalog. For an even greater selection, visit a Cokesbury store.

SAVE 10%–30% ON QUANTITY PURCHASES! ASK FOR DETAILS.

Abingdon Easter Drama and Program Collection
By Curt McCormack and others. These Easter dramas and programs emphasize the importance of Christian faith and values. Includes short monologues and recitations suitable for children, youth, and adults.
SS5-114780. $5.25

Abingdon's Easter Recitations
By Evelyn Minshull. Includes short recitations, monologues, dramas, and songs. Gives instructions on how these materials can be combined to produce pageants or programs for the special days of Holy Week—Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. Materials are keyed to their appropriate age groups for easy reference.
SS5-004276. $4.25

Resurrection: Remember and Rejoice! A Reader's Theater for Easter
By Barbara T. Rowland. This Reader's Theater piece requires three male and four female speakers. The use of a choir and a real cross is optional. Tells the Easter story in a way that relates to today. Includes suggestions for congregational singing and staging. Easy to produce. Running time: 30 minutes.
SS5-361699. $4.25

How to Stage and Produce the Perfect Passion Play
By John Lee Welton. For large or small churches who would like to present a polished Easter drama but need assistance in dealing with certain technical difficulties. This booklet is a step-by-step guide—offering ideas on the best way to stage crowd scenes, to present the Crucifixion, burial, and ascension, and to build sets and lighting to fit various moods.
SS5-179335. $9.95

Programs for Lent and Easter, Vol. 3
Edited by Elizabeth Wright Gale. Filled with innovative ideas for helping the church discover new meaning in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, plus celebrations for Pentecost. J03
SS5-351547. $9.00

Abingdon's Mother's Day Recitations: Recitations, Readings, and Skits for All Age Groups
By Evelyn Minshull. A perfect guide for creating a personalized Mother's Day banquet program, a church service, or a Sunday school presentation to show thoughtful appreciation of mothers.
SS5-004861. $4.75

Welcome Speeches and Responses for All Occasions
Sample speeches and responses for a variety of special occasions, including Mother's Day, Father's Day, Graduate recognition, Memorial day, and much more. Also included are Scripture verses appropriate to those days, and a section of poetry, prayers, and recitations.
SS5-443075. $5.95

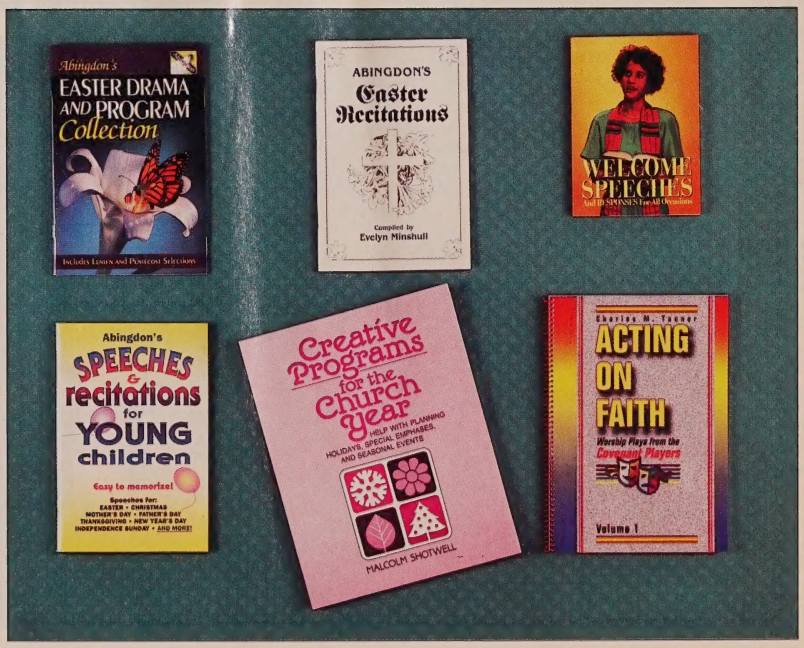
More Services for Special Days
A collection of short programs for special occasions not commonly found in denominational service worship books. Can be used in worship services, in Sunday school classes, and with youth, men's, and women's groups.
SS5-271851. $5.95

Abingdon's Speeches and Recitations for Young Children
By Libby Malloy-Kisseih. For seasonal programs, Sunday school programs, and worship services, this collection of short monologues, speeches, and recitations are suitable for young children, ages 4 through 8.
SS5-086760. $5.95

Creative Programs for the Church Year
By Malcolm G. Shotwell. Each chapter highlights a special season: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and more. J03
SS5-197258. $10.00

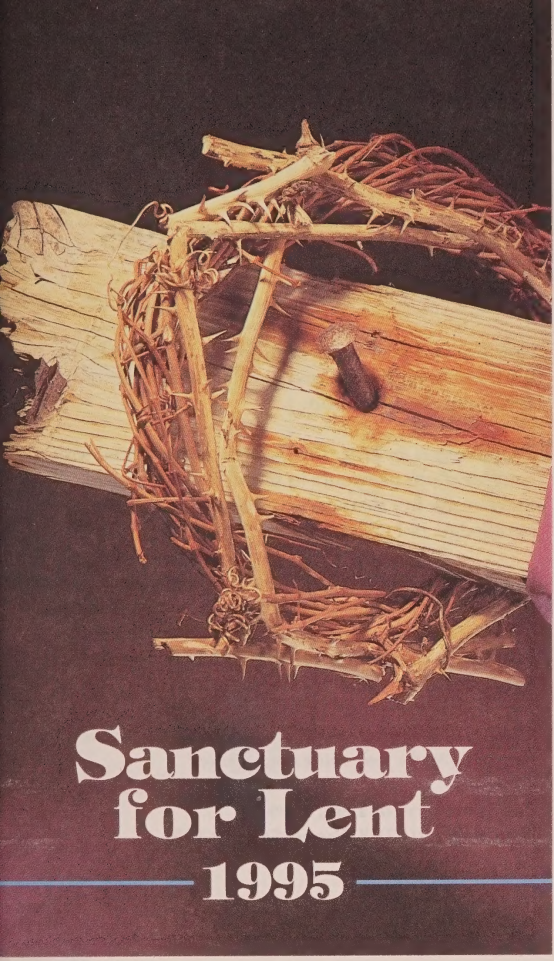
Acting on Faith, Vol. 1: Worship Plays from the Covenant Players
By Charles M. Tanner. This award-winning playwright and producer provides Biblically based dramatic plays that make the audience aware of the spirit of the Bible. They have been performed before thousands of church audiences by the Covenant Players, an international professional theater ministry based in Oxnard, California. Each may stand alone or serve as the "setup" to a sermon or commentary. They fit easily into the traditional structure of mainline Protestant worship, and are also appropriate for Evangelical and Catholic audiences. Permission granted to photocopy all plays.
SS5-097525. Paper, $17.95

See *Services for Special Days* and *Two Faces in the Shadows* on page 17.



CALL OR VISIT YOUR COKESBURY STORE

ALLELUIA!



Sanctuary for Lent

1995

Discover why more than 300,000 Christians read *The Sanctuary for Lent* each year!

The Sanctuary for Lent, 1995
by Steven Brown

Now you and your congregation can be enriched by spirit-building, Bible-based devotions each day of the 1995 Lent/Easter season.

The Sanctuary for Lent, 1995 is carefully designed with congregations like yours in mind. It's like a small, inexpensive key that unlocks new doors of Bible knowledge and wisdom for each reader.

In this year's edition, Steven Brown begins each devotion by quoting a passage of Scripture. Each devotion then offers rich spiritual insights based on the selected Scripture passage. A brief, related prayer concludes each page.

This devotional resource is affordably priced. Be sure to order enough copies for your entire congregation!

The Sanctuary for Lent, 1995
ISBN 0-687-01331-3. **Paper, $40 per 100**

E1-0346-1

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 510 NASHVILLE, TN

Postage will be paid by addressee

Cokesbury

Mail Order Department
201 Eighth Avenue South
P.O. Box 801
Nashville, TN 37202-9931

Have you included . . .

- ❑ Your check or Cokesbury/bank card account number, and signature?
- ❑ Completed Order Form, including item numbers, quantity, description, price, and daytime phone number?

Thank you for your order!

Want to give something special to someone special? But you're stumped?

Give Cokesbury Gift Certificates!

They can take the guesswork out of choosing that perfect gift! Let persons pick out something they *really* want when you take advantage of convenient Cokesbury Gift Certificates.

- May be purchased in any amount
- Available at any Cokesbury store
- Redeemable at any Cokesbury store
- No time limit on redeeming Cokesbury Gift Certificates
- Redeemable on mail orders, too!

Gloria Design | Lumen Christi | He Is Risen | Lamb of God | Easter Vigil | Christ the Savior | Benedictus | Plain

The paschal candle signifies the triumph of the Resurrection over the darkness of death. From The United Methodist Book of Worship: "A large freestanding white candle called a paschal may be used at every service during this season (Easter) and at baptisms and funerals during the rest of the year".

Description	Code No.	Dimensions: Height	Dimensions: Diam.	Price Per Pc.
Gloria Design	SS5-296707	36"	2"	**$64.85**
Gloria Design	SS5-296718	42"	2"	**$79.30**
Lumen Christi	SS5-055917	36"	2"	**$64.85**
Lumen Christi	SS5-296627	42"	2"	**$79.30**
He is Risen	SS5-296720	36"	2"	**$81.85**
He is Risen	SS5-296731	42"	2"	**$98.90**
Lamb of God	SS5-549015	36"	2"	**$64.85**
Lamb of God	SS5-549026	42"	2"	**$79.30**

Description	Code No.	Dimensions: Height	Dimensions: Diam.	Price Per Pc.
Easter Vigil	SS5-296673	36"	2"	**$81.85**
Easter Vigil	SS5-296695	42"	2"	**$98.90**
Christ the Savior	SS5-296651	36"	2"	**$81.85**
Christ the Savior	SS5-296662	42"	2"	**$98.90**
Benedictus	SS5-296640	36"	2"	**$64.85**
Benedictus	SS5-296638	42"	2"	**$79.30**
Plain	SS5-296742	36"	2"	**$49.95**
Plain	SS5-296753	42"	2"	**$61.80**

All candles are 51% beeswax.

C.

D.

Easter Vigil Candles

C. Easter Vigil Candles 100 thin congregational tapers 10" long, and 100 drip protectors. M10
SS5-194608.....**$26.75**

Candlelight Service Sets

Set contains one pastor's candle, 15" x 1⅛"; six usher's candles, 9¾" x ¾"; plus congregational candles, 4½" x 17/32"; and cardboard drip protectors. All candles are white stearic.

D. Candlelight Service Set
SS5-007147 Set with 125 congregational candles and 125 drip protectors **$30.75**
SS5-072080 Set with 250 congregational candles and 250 drip protectors **$47.35**

Individual Items from the Set:
Pastor's Candles. 15" x 1 1/16". M10
SS5-007444.....**12 for $24.40**

Usher's Candles. 9¾" x ¾". M10
SS5-007411.....**12 for $9.90**

Congregational Candles. 4½" x 17/32", with plain ends. M10
SS5-007160.....**125 for $23.15**
SS5-891462.....**250 for $33.45**

E.

Extra Drip Protectors. Sturdy white cardboard discs quickly and easily lock on the candles for protection against dripping wax. Package of 125. M10
SS5-046605.....**$4.40**

"The Little Candlelight Service Kit."
50 Congregation candles and drip protectors.
SS5-359111.....**$12.90**

E. Candlelight Service Reusable Holder Kit.
50 plastic reusable holders, 50 congregation candles.
SS5-359053.....**$43.75**

F. 7-Day Sanctuary Candle. Use with non-electric Lamps. Highly refined wax in an unbreakable plastic container. 8" x 2⅝". M10
SS5-042802.....**24 for $49.45**

F.

Candles for Easter Services

Tenebrae Candle Holder

A. Tenebrae Service Candle Holder Set. Set includes white metal holder 23" wide and seven ⅞" by 9" lavender candles. M10
SS5-176941 ..... $26.75

B. Tenebrae 7-Candle Refill Pack. ⅞" x 9" lavender candle. M10
SS5-176928 ..... $5.95

A.

B.

Paschal Candles

Cokesbury ORDER FORM

For faster service, please complete this form whether ordering by mail or placing your order toll free by telephone or fax.

Date _____

❑ Charge to Cokesbury Account
Number _____

❑ I would like to open a Cokesbury Account with this order.

❑ Payment enclosed.

CREDIT CARD Please charge to my: ❑ Visa
❑ American Express ❑ Discover ❑ Mastercard

Card No. _____

Signature _____

Exp. Date _____

(Required with all credit cards)

CHARGE TO

ORDERED BY _____

Daytime phone _____ / _____
Area Code

SHIP TO: _____
(If different from "Charge to")

Address _____
(No P.O. Box Numbers Please)

City/state/zip _____

Official Church Name _____

Cokesbury
Books • Bibles • Church Resources

CALL OR VISIT YOUR COKESBURY STORE

ORDER BY MAIL
201 Eighth Avenue South • P.O. Box 801
Nashville, TN 37202-0801

ORDER TOLL FREE: 1-800-672-1789

FAX ANYTIME: 1-800-445-8189

USE YOUR COKESBURY ACCOUNT, DISCOVER, VISA, AMERICAN EXPRESS, OR MASTERCARD.

TDD/TT TOLL-FREE SERVICE:
1-800-227-4091
(Telecommunications Device for the Deaf/Telex Telephone)

• • •

Satisfaction Guaranteed! *Please add your state's sales tax. Prices subject to change without notice. Shipping and handling extra.*

Use your professional discount! *Active and retired clergy and their spouses, diaconal ministers, DCEs, seminary students, and church libraries receive a 20% discount. Call 1-800-672-1789 to open a Cokesbury account.*

Order multiple copies of the same title of most books and Bibles and save up to 30%! Quantity discounts of 10% begin at just six copies or more. Some restrictions apply. Ask your Cokesbury customer service representative for details!

For fast, accurate ordering by mail or by phone, give all information, including the item number.

Item Number	How Many?	Title or Description	Unit Price	Total Price
XX5-000000	1	(SAMPLE ENTRY) The Church Today	$00.00	$00.00

SHIPPING & HANDLING

If Merchandise Total Is	**Add:**
Up to $30.00	$2.50
$30.01 to $40.00	$3.00
$40.01 to $80.00	$4.00
$80.01 to $125.00	$5.50
$125.01 to $150.00	$6.50
$150.01 up	4% of merchandise total

EXPRESS DELIVERY SERVICE

At your request, we will ship by any of the following express delivery services with these *additional* charges:

❑ Second Day $7.50
❑ Next Day $17.50
❑ Saturday $25.00
❑ UPS Three-day Select (UPS zones 6-8) $5.00

For Office Use only

CK	AC		
MO	SS		
R	MD		
U	MD		
TAX	S		

Merchandise Total	
Shipping & handling (See chart at left.)	
State sales tax if applicable.	
TOTAL AMOUNT	

Shop at Your Cokesbury Store

ATLANTA, GA
2495 Lawrenceville Hwy.
Decatur, GA 30033
Phone: 404-320-1034
Fax: 404-320-1201

AURORA, IL
Yorkshire Plaza
4358 East New York Street
Aurora, IL 60504
Phone: 708-585-0996
Fax: 708-585-0997

BALTIMORE, MD
Rolling Road Plaza
1102 North Rolling Road
Baltimore, MD 21228
Phone: 410-788-1900
In Washington, D.C.: 783-5170
Fax: 410-747-8093

BIRMINGHAM, AL
#350 Olde Towne
1451 Montgomery Hwy.
Birmingham, AL 35216
Phone: 205-822-5190
Fax: 205-823-1374

BLACKSTONE, VA
The Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center
707 4th Street
Blackstone, VA 23824
Phone: 804-292-7662
Fax: 804-292-7674

CANTON, OH
5110 Whipple Avenue
Canton, OH 44718
Phone: 216-493-0079
In Cleveland: 579-0333
Fax: 216-493-8067

CHARLESTON, WV
612 E. Washington Street
Charleston, WV 25301
Phone: 304-345-9377
Fax: 304-345-2503

CHARLOTTE, NC
726 Tyvola Road, Suite 100
Charlotte, NC 28217
Phone: 704-525-4543
In Greensboro: 273-0741
In Winston-Salem: 724-0270
Fax: 704-521-9428

CINCINNATI, OH
8376 Vine Street at Galbraith
Cincinnati, OH 45216
Phone: 513-821-4100
Fax: 513-821-5459

CLEARWATER, FL
Clearwater East Shopping Center
2781 Gulf-to-Bay Blvd.
Clearwater, FL 34619
Phone: 813-797-7303
In Tampa: 253-0389.
In Sarasota and Manatee Counties: 954-4548
Fax: 813-797-7644

COLUMBIA, SC
2730 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29210
Phone: 803-798-3220
In Charleston: 720-8978
Fax: 803-798-2542

COLUMBUS, OH
5520 N. High Street at Lincoln
Columbus, OH 43214
Phone: 614-436-5636
Fax: 614-436-5670

DALLAS, TX
19200 Preston Road
Dallas, TX 75252
Phone: 214-964-5777
Fax: 214-964-5676

DENVER/ENGLEWOOD, CO
730 W. Hampden Ave.
Englewood, CO 80110
Phone: 303-761-5070
In Colorado Springs: 520-5022
In Ft. Collins: 224-9727
Fax: 303-761-6381

DES MOINES, IA
3528 Merle Hay Road
Des Moines, IA 50310
Phone: 515-278-1631
Fax: 515-276-7929

DETROIT/LIVONIA, MI
16184 Middlebelt Road
Concord Plaza
Livonia, MI 48154
Phone: 313-425-8787
Fax: 313-425-0002

FORT WORTH, TX
2720 West Berry Street
Fort Worth, TX 76109
Phone: 817-926-5313
Fax: 817-924-8724

HARRISBURG, PA
The Point Mall
I-83 at Union Deposit Road
Harrisburg, PA 17111
Phone: 717-564-2212
In Altoona: 942-1318
In Lancaster: 394-0380
In Williamsport: 322-9860
Fax: 717-564-5270

HOUSTON, TX
3502 West Alabama at Edloe
(Across from St. Luke's United Methodist Church)
Houston, TX 77027
Phone: 713-621-1755
Fax: 713-621-6201

INDIANAPOLIS/FISHERS, IN
8808 E. 116th Street
Fishers, IN 46038
Phone: 317-849-1551
In Ft. Wayne: 423-2596
Fax: 317-578-3960

JACKSON, MS
Centre Park Shopping Center
1060 E. County Line Rd.
Suite #1
Ridgeland, MS 39157
Phone: 601-978-3827
Fax: 601-978-3724

KANSAS CITY, MO
6501 East 87th Street
Kansas City, MO 64138
Phone: 816-765-4422
Fax: 816-763-0833

KNOXVILLE, TN
3606 Western Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37921
Phone: 615-525-4601
Fax: 615-525-5387

LAKE JUNALUSKA, NC
225 Lakeshore Dr.
Lake Junaluska, NC 28745
Phone: 704-456-8746
Fax: 704-452-5983

LEESBURG/ FRUITLAND PARK, FL
Life Enrichment Center
04991 Picciola Road
Fruitland Park, FL 34731
Phone: 904-365-0775
Fax: 904-365-1792

LEXINGTON, KY
1555 New Circle Road
Woodhill Circle Plaza
Lexington, KY 40509
Phone: 606-268-0274
Fax: 606-268-1395

LITTLE ROCK, AR
Center Street at Seventh
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: 501-372-4901
Fax: 501-372-7236

LUBBOCK, TX
4414 82nd at Quaker
Lubbock, TX 79424
Phone: 806-799-0940
In West Texas and New Mexico
1-800-331-9153
Fax: 806-799-3440

MEMPHIS, TN
Audubon Place Shopping Center
4694 Spottswood
Memphis, TN 38117
Phone: 901-683-8271
Fax: 901-682-9439

MINNEAPOLIS/ BURNSVILLE, MN
2020 West County Road 42
Burnsville, MN 55337
Phone: 612-788-1392
Fax: 612-788-8758

MOUNT SEQUOYAH, AR
Mount Sequoyah Conference Center
150 NW Skyline Drive
Fayetteville, AR 72701
Phone: 501-442-9832

NASHVILLE, TN
301 Eighth Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37203
Phone: 615-749-6123 for orders;
615-749-6227 for customer billing information.
Fax: 615-749-6072

PASADENA, CA
476 E. Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91101
Phone: 818-796-5773
Fax: 818-796-0207

PHILADELPHIA/ KING OF PRUSSIA, PA
150 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
Phone: 610-265-3341
Fax: 610-265-7638

PHOENIX, AZ
Suite 7
3425 West Thunderbird Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85023
Phone: 602-789-0544
Fax: 602-789-0526

PITTSBURGH/MARS, PA
1324 Route 19
Mars, PA 16046
Phone: 412-776-6150
Fax: 412-776-0076

RALEIGH, NC
North Market Square
1669 N. Market Drive
Raleigh, NC 27609
Phone: 919-872-8810
In Durham: 682-9243
Fax: 919-876-8764

RICHMOND, VA
3700 West End Drive
Richmond, VA 23294
Phone: 804-270-1070
In Norfolk: 625-8366
Fax: 804-270-0987

SACRAMENTO/ ROSEVILLE, CA
415 Roseville Square
Roseville, CA 95678
Phone: 916-781-6553
Fax: 916-781-7620

SAN ANTONIO, TX
2161 Northwest Military
San Antonio, TX 78213
Phone: 210-525-9685
Fax: 210-525-0079

SEATTLE/KIRKLAND, WA
12703 NE 124th St.
Kirkland, WA 98033
Phone: 206-820-1093
Fax: 206-820-9256

ST. LOUIS/DES PERES, MO
11781 Manchester Road
Des Peres, MO 63131
Phone: 314-822-9335
Fax: 314-822-0435

SYRACUSE, NY
2620 Erie Blvd., East
Syracuse, NY 13224
Phone: 315-445-2161
Fax: 315-446-6812

TEANECK, NJ
1550 Teaneck Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666
Phone: 201-837-0507
Fax: 201-837-1578

TULSA, OK
Fontana Shopping Center
(51st and Memorial)
5032 South Memorial
Tulsa, OK 74145
Phone: 918-663-9885
Fax: 918-664-2437

A sample devotional from
The Sanctuary for Lent, 1995

MONDAY, APRIL 10, 1995

Read I Thessalonians 5:12-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

—I Thessalonians 5:16-18

We usually associate Holy Week with a time when we experience something of the pain and sorrow of Jesus. We identify with his suffering, and we feel somewhat somber as we reflect upon the ugliness and cruelty of evil then, and even now.

However, there need to be interludes of joy as well, even prior to the joy of Easter. Joy is the by-product of our recognition that we are loved. Unworthy as we are—we are loved!

Joy can be an intense, deep, and abiding experience. It may manifest itself in quiet and subtle ways.

Joy comes into our hearts when we release all guilt and all anxiety into the merciful hands of Jesus. The overladed past is surrendered, and the uncertain future is also turned over to him. It is then that we are free. It is then that joy comes—a joy that transcends circumstances.

Prayer: O God, today I want to be open to the gift of joy. Amen.

Published by Abingdon Press

Shop at Your Cokesbury Store

ATLANTA, GA
2495 Lawrenceville Hwy.
Decatur, GA 30033
Phone: 404-320-1034
Fax: 404-320-1201

AURORA, IL
Yorkshire Plaza
4358 East New York Street
Aurora, IL 60504
Phone: 708-585-0996
Fax: 708-585-0997

BALTIMORE, MD
Rolling Road Plaza
1102 North Rolling Road
Baltimore, MD 21228
Phone: 410-788-1900
In Washington, D.C.: 783-5170
Fax: 410-747-8093

BIRMINGHAM, AL
#350 Olde Towne
1451 Montgomery Hwy.
Birmingham, AL 35216
Phone: 205-822-5190
Fax: 205-823-1374

BLACKSTONE, VA
The Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center
707 4th Street
Blackstone, VA 23824
Phone: 804-292-7662
Fax: 804-292-7674

CANTON, OH
5110 Whipple Avenue
Canton, OH 44718
Phone: 216-493-0079
In Cleveland: 579-0333
Fax: 216-493-8067

CHARLESTON, WV
612 E. Washington Street
Charleston, WV 25301
Phone: 304-345-9377
Fax: 304-345-2503

CHARLOTTE, NC
726 Tyvola Road, Suite 100
Charlotte, NC 28217
Phone: 704-525-4543
In Greensboro: 273-0741
In Winston-Salem: 724-0270
Fax: 704-521-9428

CINCINNATI, OH
8376 Vine Street at Galbraith
Cincinnati, OH 45216
Phone: 513-821-4100
Fax: 513-821-5459

CLEARWATER, FL
Clearwater East Shopping Center
2781 Gulf-to-Bay Blvd.
Clearwater, FL 34619
Phone: 813-797-7303
In Tampa: 253-0389.
In Sarasota and Manatee Counties: 954-4548
Fax: 813-797-7644

COLUMBIA, SC
2730 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29210
Phone: 803-798-3220
In Charleston: 720-8978
Fax: 803-798-2542

COLUMBUS, OH
5520 N. High Street at Lincoln
Columbus, OH 43214
Phone: 614-436-5636
Fax: 614-436-5670

DALLAS, TX
19200 Preston Road
Dallas, TX 75252
Phone: 214-964-5777
Fax: 214-964-5676

DENVER/ENGLEWOOD, CO
730 W. Hampden Ave.
Englew
Phone:
In Colo
In Ft. C
Fax: 30

DES M
3528 M
Des Mo
Phone:
Fax: 51

DETRO
16184 M
Concor
Livonia,
Phone:
Fax: 31

FORT W
2720 W
Fort Wo
Phone:
Fax: 81

HARRIS
The Poi
I-83 at U
Harrisbu
Phone:
In Altoo
In Lanc
In Willia
Fax: 71

HOUSTON, TX
3502 West Alabama at Edloe
(Across from St. Luke's United Methodist Church)
Houston, TX 77027
Phone: 713-621-1755
Fax: 713-621-6201

INDIANAPOLIS/FISHERS, IN
8808 E. 116th Street
Fishers, IN 46038
Phone: 317-849-1551
In Ft. Wayne: 423-2596
Fax: 317-578-3960

JACKSON, MS
Centre Park Shopping Center
1060 E. County Line Rd.
Suite #1
Ridgeland, MS 39157
Phone: 601-978-3827
Fax: 601-978-3724

KANSAS CITY, MO
6501 East 87th Street
Kansas City, MO 64138
Phone: 816-765-4422
Fax: 816-763-0833

KNOXVILLE, TN
3606 Western Ave.

LUBBOCK, TX
4414 82nd at Quaker
Lubbock, TX 79424
Phone: 806-799-0940
In West Texas and New Mexico
1-800-331-9153
Fax: 806-799-3440

MEMPHIS, TN
Audubon Place Shopping Center
4694 Spottswood
Memphis, TN 38117
Phone: 901-683-8271
Fax: 901-682-9439

MINNEAPOLIS/BURNSVILLE, MN
2020 West County Road 42
Burnsville, MN 55337
Phone: 612-788-1392
Fax: 612-788-8758

MOUNT SEQUOYAH, AR
Mount Sequoyah Conference Center
150 NW Skyline Drive
Fayetteville, AR 72701
Phone: 501-442-9832

RALEIGH, NC
North Market Square
1669 N. Market Drive
Raleigh, NC 27609
Phone: 919-872-8810
In Durham: 682-9243
Fax: 919-876-8764

RICHMOND, VA
3700 West End Drive
Richmond, VA 23294
Phone: 804-270-1070
In Norfolk: 625-8366
Fax: 804-270-0987

SACRAMENTO/ROSEVILLE, CA
415 Roseville Square
Roseville, CA 95678
Phone: 916-781-6553
Fax: 916-781-7620

SAN ANTONIO, TX
2161 Northwest Military
San Antonio, TX 78213
Phone: 210-525-9685
Fax: 210-525-0079

SEATTLE/KIRKLAND, WA
12703 NE 124th St.
Kirkland, WA 98033

ORDER FORM

Please send me _____ copies of *The Sanctuary for Lent, 1995* (Paper, ISBN 0-687-01331-3), at **40¢ each or $40.00 per 100.**
Charge to Cokesbury Account No. _____

( ) Please open a Cokesbury Account with this order.
( ) **Check payable to Cokesbury enclosed.**
( ) Charge to my credit card (circle one):
American Express Visa Discover MasterCard

Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____
Signature _____
(Required with any credit card charge)

Charge to: _____
Address _____
City _____
State/Zip _____

Ship to: _____
(If different from Charge to)
Address _____
City _____
State/Zip _____

Ordered by: _____
Daytime Phone _____/_____
(In case we have a question about your order)

Satisfaction guaranteed! Prices subject to change. Add your state's sales tax. For orders up to $30, add $2.50 for shipping and handling; from $30.01 to $40, add $3; from $40.01 to $80, add $4.

Cokesbury

Send order to:
Cokesbury Service Center
201 Eighth Avenue South
P.O. Box 801
Nashville, TN 37202-0801

973406

For Office Use Only

CK	AC	
MO	SS	
R	MD	
U	MD	
TAX	$	
TOTAL		

Photo: H. Armstrong Roberts No. 01400X
Copyright © 1994 by Abingdon Press Litho in U.S.A.

SAVE 20% ON SELECTED TENEBRAE CANDELABRA UNTIL MARCH 31

***A.* Black Steel Tabletop Model.** Black steel with brass high-lights. Built-in Christ candle holder . Plexiglass insert supporting the ring resting on ball feet. Uses fourteen ⅞"-dia. candles (candles not included). S10
SS5-381555.(SB18TE). ***$320.00***
(after 3/31/95, $400.00)

***B.* Solid Brass Floor Model.** Plexiglass ring interior. Built-in Christ candle holder. Remove top to convert to Paschal candlestick. Uses fourteen ⅞"-dia. candles (candles not included). S10
SS5-359838. (SB2910TE) ***$1160.00***
(after 3/31/95, $1450.00)

***C.* Solid Brass Tenebrae Candelabra Head.** 24" diameter. Attaches to Sudbury floor model Paschal candlesticks or Advent wreaths. Uses fourteen ⅞"-dia. candles (not included). S10
SS5-359064. (SB2906TE) ***$740.00***
(after 3/31/95, $925.00)

Tenebrae Candles.
11" x 3" White Pillar Candle.
SS5-197726. $14.50
10" x ⅞" Tube Candle.
SS5-489194. $30.50
13" x 3" Tube Candle, Brass Top.
SS5-521136. $150.00

***D.* Tenebrae Candelabra.** Made of heavy cast silver-toned metal with purple enamel background. Beautifully sculpted wording from Luke in calligraphy: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." Holds seven ⅞" candles. Candelabra is 20" wide. (candles not included). T04
SS5-185648. $95.00

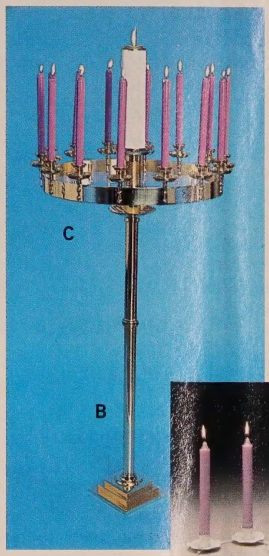
***E.* Tenebrae Service Candle Holder Set.** Includes white metal holder and seven lavender candles, ⅞" x 9". M10
SS5-176941. $26.75

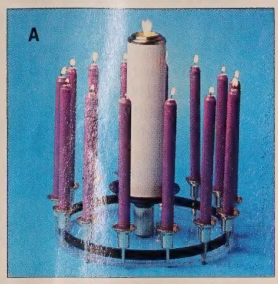
***F.* Seven-candle Refill Pack.** Lavender. ⅞" x 9". M10
SS5-176928. $5.95

Tenebrae and Other Services

Two Faces in the Shadows: A Dramatic Dialogue for Tenebrae
By Paul D. Duke and Jeff Allee. The events of the Passion are remembered in this dramatic dialogue between Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. The setting is the Upper Room, where Christ and the disciples had shared a meal. Between each scene is a suggested piece of music to be used as an instrumental background to enhance the audience's time of reflection. During the service, seven candles and the Christ candle are extinguished. A01
SS5-426650. $1.95

Services for Special Days
A collection of services not commonly found in denominational service worship books. Includes a Tenebrae service, plus many others. A01
SS5-380960. $5.95





F

***G.* Gold Oil Stock.** Bright gold, single oil stock. Engraved O.I. ⅞" high, 1" dia. S31
SS5-548682. With ring. **$80.00**
SS5-383166. Without ring. **$70.00**

***H.* Carrier Capsule.** Lightweight aluminum.
SS5-486544. $4.00

Oil Stocks. Solid brass or anodized aluminum. Threaded lids and rubber seals prevent leakage. Also available in silver-plating and 24K gold-plating upon request. R02
I. **SS5-501867.** Brass. **$55.00**
J. **SS5-501856.** Aluminum brasstone. **$30.00**

Annointing Oil. Frankincense and myrrh scented. Olive oil base. ¼-oz. bottle.
K. **SS5-486486.** Scented. **$4.00**
L. **SS5-486420.** Unscented. **$3.00**

Sanctuary Accessories

COKESBURY SOLID BRASS OFFERING PLATE SETS 10% OFF UNTIL MARCH 31, 1995

A. Four plates with 20 mats. Five interchangeable mats for each plate with IHS symbol in liturgical white, red, green, purple, and blue. 12" diameter, 2" deep. R02
SS5-008871. (120) ***$256.50***
(after 3/31/95, $285.00)

Extra Mats. One each of 5 colors. R02
SS5-008882. Set of 5, ***$37.80***
(after 3/31/95, $42.00)

ASH PYXIS

Holds palm ashes for Ash Wednesday services. R02
B. **Solid brass.** 4⅝". 9 oz.
SS5-521034. (RW-62) **$100.00**
Solid brass. 5¼". 8 oz.
SS5-521045. (RW-60) **$85.00**
C. **Ceramic.**
SS5-546012. (RW61) **$60.00**
D. **Earthenware.** 5" high x 3½" wide. Palm leaf design on lid.
SS5-546411. Brown, **$24.95**
SS5-546386. Blue, **$24.95**
Palm Ashes. 100% pure. S11
SS5-511115. 10 grams. **$4.95**
SS5-511104. 50 grams. **$19.95**

CANDLELIGHTER/ EXTINGUISHERS

Brass with wooden handle. S10
60" long.
SS5-011105. (SB5-5') **$64.75**
E. **36" long.**
SS5-011093. (SB5-3') **$59.95**
F. **30" long.** For extinguishing large diameter candles.
SS5-044630. (SB9) **$65.00**
G. **24" long.**
SS5-044628. (SB6) **$54.00**
H. **12" long.**
SS5-011127. (SB7) **$47.00**

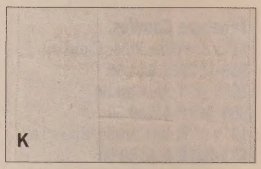
BAPTISMAL BOWLS & ACCESSORIES

10% off until March 31, 1995

I. **Narrow-stem Baptismal Bowl and Cover.** Brass. With liner. Dia. 6½". Round base. S10
Bowl.
SS5-012190. (1616) ***$90.00***
(After 3/31/95, $100.00)
Cover.
SS5-136694. (1616C) ***$65.25***
(After 3/31/95, $72.50)
Extra liner.
SS5-019134. (186N) ***$18.00***
(After 3/31/95, $20.00)

J. **Bud Vase.** Brass with cutout cross. Glass tube. 6¾" high overall. S10
SS5-284618. (10) Each, ***$103.50***
(After 3/31/95, $115.00)

K. **Baptismal Napkins.** Design embroidered in white thread on Irish linen. 10½" square. N01
Each, ***$6.98;*** **12 for *$80.55***
(After 3/31/95, Each, **$7.75;**
12 for $89.50)
SS5-008302. Greek cross
SS5-008290. Shell
SS5-057153. Dove



Free Altarware Catalogs

You will find the finest altar appointments pictured and described in two catalogs available free from Cokesbury: the Sudbury catalog (SS5-262406) and the Artistic catalog (SS5-262383). For your free copies, visit your Cokesbury store, use the Catalog Request Card, call toll free 1-800-672-1789, or fax 1-800-445-8189 anytime.

Memorial Engraving

Any solid brass altar appointment can be engraved at minimal cost. Choice of block or script lettering. Block Letters: 60¢ per letter, numeral or punctuation mark. Script letters: 65¢ per letter, numeral or punctuation mark.

SOLID BRASS VASES 10% OFF UNTIL MARCH 31

A. Oblong 3-step Rectangle Base.
4¾" high; 8½" x 4½". With liner. S10
SS5-011504. (153) Each, *$234.00*
(After 3/31/95, $260.00)
Extra Vase Liner
SS5-019145. (153N) Each, *$22.50*
(After 3/31/95, $25.00)

B. 3-step Square Base Urn.
9⅛" high. Top diameter 8⅞". With liner. S10
SS5-086714. (162) Each, *$225.00*
(After 3/31/95, $250.00)
Extra Vase Liner
SS5-284584. (162N) Each, *$13.50*
(After 3/31/95, $15.00)

C. 3-step Square Base.
With liner. 9⅜" high. 5⅜" top diameter. S10
With IHS.
SS5-441672. (SB162QIHS). Each, *$288.00*
(After 3/31/95, $320.00)
Plain.
SS5-441615. (SB162Q). Each, *$238.50*
(After 3/31/95, $265.00)

D. Oversized 3-step Square Base.
With liner. 12" tall. 8½" deep. S10
SS5-070547. (650) Each, *$228.60*
(After 3/31/95, $254.00)
Extra Vase Liner.
SS5-070525. (650V) Each, *$13.50*
(After 3/31/95, $15.00)

10% OFF THIS BEAUTIFUL ALTAR SET UNTIL MARCH 31

Elegant three-dimensional style solid brass altar set. Available in 5-piece sets with 24" cross and 10" candlesticks or 30" cross with 12" candlesticks. All have 3-step square base. R02

E. 5-piece Set with 24" Cross.
24" cross, pair of 10" candlesticks, and pair of 11" vases.
SS5-070445. (1024SET) Set, *$986.40*
(After 3/31/95, $1096.00)

F. 5-piece Set with 30" Cross.
30" cross, pair of 12" candlesticks, and pair of 11" vases.
SS5-070480. (1030SET) Set, *$1031.40*
(After 3/31/95, $1146.00)

SAVE 50% OR MORE ON THESE CLOSEOUT ITEMS Quantities Limited—Mail Order Only

G. 6½" Vases.
With liners. (232)
SS5-030928. Pair, *Reg. $240.00, Sale $119.00*

H. 10" Vases.
Square base, with liners. S10
SS5-310924. (SB882) Pair, *Reg. $350.00, Sale $150.00*

I. Angel Vase.
SS5-441193. (6224) *Reg. $176.00, Sale $84.95*

J. Pastor's Communion Set.
Disposable cups, polished aluminum wafer box, and plastic bottle. Leatherette-covered handmade wooden case has blue velvet interior and embroidered Communion symbol. Includes purple/white ribbon-style stole. 7½" H; 4¾" W; 2" D. S10
SS5-284653. (1266DS) *Reg. $99.50, Sale $49.95*

K. Deluxe Communion Set.
Black leatherette handmade wooden case has blue velvet interior with Lamb symbol embroidered inside lid. Silverplated tray, bread container, top and sleeve for 2 oz. plastic bottle. Linen napkin. Serves six. S10
SS5-337444. (1245-LAMB)
Reg. $195.00,
Sale $90.00

Spring Closeouts

LIMITED QUANTITIES—PHONE OR MAIL ORDER ONLY

***A.* Solid Green T-shirt.** 50% cotton and 50% polyester. Two-color cross and flame logo on left chest. Shown in white, available only in green. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52
SS5-278834. **Was $9.25, Sale $3.95**

Ringer T-shirt. White with red trim. 50% cotton and 50% polyester. Two-color cross and flame logo on left chest. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52
SS5-006132. **Was $9.95, Sale $3.95**

***B.* Golf Shirt.** White with red stripes. Button front placket with tailored collar and hemmed sleeve. Made of heavyweight 50% cotton and 50% polyester, full-cut with colorfast trim. UM logo embroidered on left chest. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52
SS5-278903. **Was $24.95, Sale $7.95**

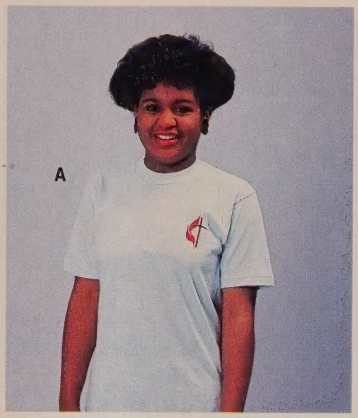
Sweat Shirt. 50% cotton and 50% polyester. Cross and flame logo. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52 **Was $17.50, Sale $6.95**
C. SS5-278721. Light Green
D. SS5-278787. Navy

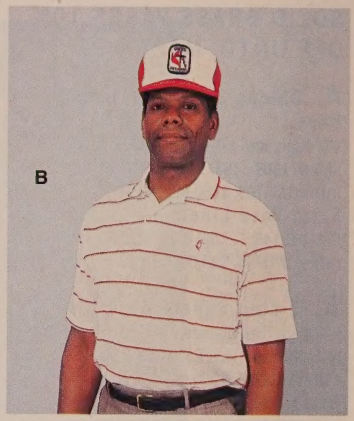
Sweat Pants. 50% cotton and 50% polyester. Cross and flame logo. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52 **Was $17.50, Sale $6.95**
E. SS5-278561. Light Green
F. SS5-278515. Navy

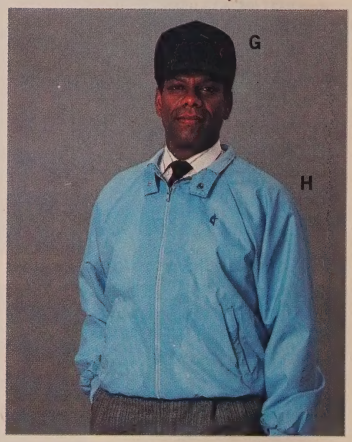
***G.* Golf Cap.** Navy twill golf cap with cross and flame logo. Navy braid and adjustable leather back strap to fit any size. P52
SS5-178993. **Was $9.25, Sale $3.95**

***H.* Golf Jacket.** Light blue nylon taffeta, fully lined. Front zipper. Knit lined stand-up collar with extended tab. Rib knit cuffs and waistband. Cross and flame logo embroidered in navy blue on left chest. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52
SS5-278663. **Was $42.50, Sale $12.95**

***I.* Red Satin Jacket.** With rib knit collar, cuffs, and waistband. Flannel lined, front snaps. Cross and flame logo in black on left chest. *Specify adult size: S, M, L, XL.* P52
SS5-278617. **Was $39.00, Sale $10.95**







Spring Closeouts

LIMITED QUANTITIES—PHONE OR MAIL ORDER ONLY

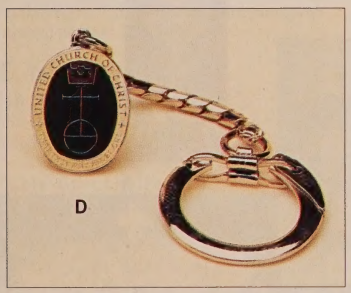
***A.* Puzzles.** *Reg. $8.95, Sale $1.95*
SS5-285258. Simon
SS5-285431. David
SS5-293420. King Josiah
SS5-293486. Elisha
SS5-320967. God's World

***B.* Stoles.**
SS5-221350. Red Ely. *Reg. $125.00,* ***Sale $29.95***
SS5-102280. Green Futurist. *Reg. $99.50,* ***Sale $19.95***

***C.* Funeral Pall.** Coronation.
SS5-340976. *Reg. $150.00,* ***Sale $49.95***

***D.* Charm.** UCC.
SS5-044787. *Reg. $16.95,* ***Sale $2.95***

***E.* Banners.** Size 7" x 24".
Reg. $99.95, ***Sale $39.95***
SS5-311325. Easter
SS5-311358. Baptismal
SS5-311360. Communion
SS5-311371. Wedding
Banner Sets. *Reg. $295.00,* ***Sale $74.95***
SS5-311347. Seasonal Set
SS5-311382. Celebrate Set



Communionware

SAVE 10% ON SELECTED COMMUNIONWARE UNTIL MARCH 31

A-E. SILVER-PLATED

Early American design. Heavily silver-plated bronze with gold lining. R02
A. **Host Box.** 250 hosts. 4⅜".
SS5-102622. (ASA903G) *$145.80*
(After 3/31/95, $162.00)
B. **Ciborium.** 375 hosts. 10⅛".
SS5-102586. (ASA901G) *$296.10*
(After 3/31/95, $329.00)
C. **Flagon.** 60 oz. 13⅜".
SS5-102600. (ASA902G) *$535.50*
(After 3/31/95, $595.00)
D. **Chalice.** 16 oz. 7⅛".
SS5-102564. (ASA900G) *$225.90*
(After 3/31/95, $251.00)
E. **Paten.** 6⅞" diameter.
SS5-102644. (ASA915G) *$101.70*
(After 3/31/95, $113.00)

ALUMINUM

Offers the beauty of brasstone or silvertone communionware with a tarnish-free finish. R02
Tray. 12". Holds 40 cups (not included).
SS5-009044. (500AB) Brasstone, *$37.80*
(After 3/31/95, $42.00)
SS5-008984. (500A) Silvertone, *$36.00*
(After 3/31/95, $40.00)
Tray Cover. 11".
SS5-009055. (501AB) Brasstone, *$32.40*
SS5-008995. (501A) Silvertone, *$32.40*
(After 3/31/95, Each $36.00)
Base. 12¾". Order one for each tray stack.
SS5-009066. (502AB) Brasstone, *$22.50*
SS5-009000. (502A) Silvertone, *$22.50*
(After 3/31/95, Each $25.00)
Bread Plate. 10".
SS5-009090. (505AB) Brasstone, *$24.30*
(After 3/31/95, $27.00)
SS5-009033. (505A) Silvertone, *$23.40*
(After 3/31/95, $26.00)
Stacking Bread Plate. 10".
SS5-009088. (504AB) Brasstone, *$34.20*
(After 3/31/95, $38.00)
SS5-044492. (504A) Silvertone, *$33.30*
(After 3/31/95, $37.00)
Stacking Bread Plate Base. 8¼".
SS5-194916. (507AB) Brasstone, *$20.70*
SS5-194927. (507A) Silvertone, *$20.70*
(After 3/31/95, Each $23.00)
Bread Plate Cover. 6¾". (Fits both plates.)
SS5-009077. (503AB) Brasstone, *$23.40*
SS5-009011. (503A) Silvertone, *$23.40*
(After 3/31/95, Each $26.00)

HANDMADE EARTHENWARE CHALICE & PATEN SET

Large Chalice.
9½" tall with 32 oz. capacity. I15
F. **SS5-288718. Blue. $49.95**
G. **SS5-288720. Brown. $49.95**
H. **11" Breadplate.**
SS5-288731. Blue. $29.95
SS5-288742. Brown. $29.95
I. **7½" Brown Flagon.**
SS5-290927. $36.007½"
Blue Flagon.
SS5-290916. $36.00

J-O. SOLID BRASS

Our most popular set! Crafted of heavy, serviceable, solid brass with unparalleled beauty and elegance. A durable protective finish seals the high luster. S10
J. **12⅜" Tray.** Holds 40 cups (not included).
SS5-012133. (1161) *$99.00*
(After 3/31/95, $110.00)
K. **11¼" Tray Cover**
SS5-012144. (1612) *$87.75*
(After 3/31/95, $97.50)
L. **12⅜" Base.** Order one for each tray stack.
SS5-044710. (1613) *$63.00*
(After 3/31/95, $70.00)
10" Breadplate
SS5-012166. (1615) *$42.75*
(After 3/31/95, $47.50)
M. **10" Self-stacking Breadplate**
SS5-012177. (1615B) *$85.50*
(After 3/31/95, $95.00)
N. **10³/₁₆" Breadplate Cover**
SS5-012188. (1615C) *$83.25*
(After 3/31/95, $92.50)
O. **Agape.** Gold-lined. 8⅜". 18 oz. S10
SS5-136934. (178-1-SP). Silver Plate, *$288.00*
(After 3/31/95, $320.00)
SS5-491211. (178-1-BR). Brass, *$252.00*
(After 3/31/95, $280.00)

O

Communion Supplies

COMMUNION SUPPLIES

A. Disposable Plastic Communion Cups. Smaller, flared rim eliminates crowded trays, makes cups easy to handle. 1⅜" deep. #6 recyclable Polystyrene. R02
SS5-133510. Box of 1000, $16.95; Case of 5000 for **$74.00**
SS5-222718. Stack of 100, $4.00

B. Communion Bread
Unleavened ¼" squares. One box of approximately 500. N03
SS5-008357. Per box, $4.50

C. Communion Wafers
500 thin, unleavened 1⅛" dia. round wafers in 4 rolls of 125 per box. N03
SS5-008368. Per box, $4.50

D. Cup Filler
Quart frosted bottle has nickel-plated siphon and bulb. S10
SS5-011220. (100) $29.95
SS5-011231. Extra bottle (100BT). $10.00
SS5-011242. Extra bulb (100B). $5.00

COMMUNION LINENS

Crafted of pure linen! Table cover's size allows for 12" drop on each side. Embroidered symbol with 2" decorative hemstitching and mitered corners. N01

E. Table Cover With "In Remembrance of Me"
SS5-104027. 50" x 80". $339.95
SS5-104038. 50" x 86". $355.00

Table Cover With IHS
SS5-832485. 50" x 80". $255.00
SS5-832532. 50" x 86". $270.00

Table Cover With Latin Cross
SS5-073368. 50" x 86". $253.00

Table Cover (Plain)
SS5-019076. 50" x 86". $210.00

Elements Cover
SS5-008197. 49" x 72". $180.00

Napkin
For bread plate. ½" hem and mitered corners. 12" square.
SS5-008277. Celtic cross. $25.75
SS5-008266. Latin cross. $25.75
SS5-008288. Plain. $16.50

Easy-Care Communion Table Cover. 51% linen; 49% polyester. Almost wrinkle-free after hand washing. Requires minimal pressing.

"In Remembrance of Me."
SS5-152422. 47" x 80". **$324.95**
SS5-152400. 47" x 86". **$334.95**

With IHS.
SS5-152353. 47" x 80". **$232.00**
SS5-152386. 47" x 86". **$247.00**

Without Symbol.
SS5-008164. 47" x 80". **$175.00**

Easy-care Elements Cover. 51% linen; 49% polyester. Almost wrinkle free if hand washed; minimal pressing. N01
SS5-008222. 47" x 72". **$159.50**

For more Communion supplies, see your 1994-95 Cokesbury Catalog, p. 90.

Welcome Easter Visitors!

New Designs

Welcome Visitor Pew Cards. 2½" x 5". A01
100 of same design for $8.50.

SS5-321344

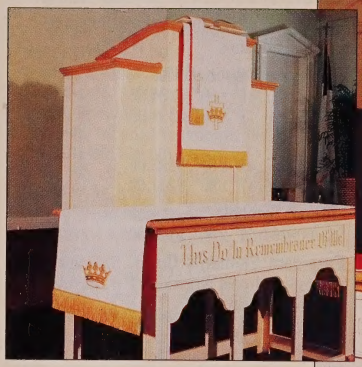
SS5-321352

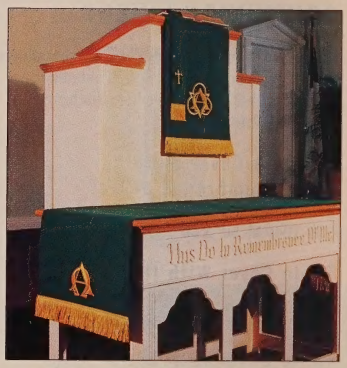
Parament Sets

READY-MADE REVERSIBLE PARAMENTS WITH CUSTOM-MADE QUALITY 10% OFF UNTIL MARCH 31!

With the introduction of our newest line of paraments, your church now has an excellent opportunity to obtain custom-quality paraments at a fraction of the cost. The convenient reversible design means you can display beautiful paraments in each of the four liturgical colors by buying only two sets — one red/white and one purple/green. They're in stock now, and as always, they carry Cokesbury's unconditional guarantee.

Made of revolutionary Liberty fabric, every piece is colorfast and soil resistant. The inner lining is fused to the face fabric to ensure stability, retention of original size, and correct hanging. Bold treatment of color, precision machine-stitched embroidery, beautifully designed traditional symbols, and gold fringe accents — all custom quality — combine to provide an exceptional value for your congregation.





THREE BASIC PIECES

Bookmark. 3½" x 36".

Pulpit Scarf. 18" x 36", for reading desks 18" or more wide.

Table Runner. 20" x 80", for tables 20" to 24" wide, 48" to 60" long.

RED/WHITE SETS

Bookmark and Pulpit Scarf. N01
SS5-535452. Set of 2, ***$233.96***
(After 3/31/95, $259.95)

Bookmark, Pulpit Scarf, and Communion Table Runner. N01
SS5-535463. Set of 3, ***$350.96***
(After 3/31/95, $389.95)

PURPLE/GREEN SETS

Bookmark and Pulpit Scarf. N01
SS5-535430. Set of 2, ***$233.96***
(After 3/31/95, $259.95)

Bookmark, Pulpit Scarf, and Communion Table Runner. N01
SS5-535474. Set of 3, ***$350.96***
(After 3/31/95, $389.95)

COMBINATION SETS & STOLES

Bookmark and Pulpit Scarf. One of each in red/white and one of each in purple/green. N01
SS5-535485. Set of 4, ***$418.46***
(After 3/31/95, $464.95)

Bookmark, Pulpit Scarf, and Communion Table Runner. One of each in red/white and one of each in purple/green. N01
SS5-535508. Set of 6, ***$625.50***
(After 3/31/95, $695.00)

Bookmark, Pulpit Scarf, Communion Table Runner, and Stole. One of each in red/white and one of each in purple/green. N01
SS5-535510. Set of 8, ***$760.46***
(After 3/31/95, $844.95)

Bookmark, Pulpit Scarf, and Communion Table Runner. Four bookmarks, four pulpit scarves (two red/white ;two purple/green), and two Communion table runners (one red/white ; one purple/green). N01
SS5-535521. Set of 10, ***$954.00***
(After 3/31/95, $1060.00)

Matching Reversible Stoles. 90" long, 4½" wide, narrowing to 1¼" at the contoured neck. Gold-colored chainette fringe. N01
SS5-535543. Red/white. ***$71.55***
(After 3/31/95, $79.50)
SS5-535532. Purple/green. ***$71.55***
(After 3/31/95, $79.50)

Stoles & Banners

CLERGY STOLES

NEW! REVELATION SERIES

Bold and beautiful! Unique combination of embroidery, appliques, and color creates unusually beautiful, seasonally appropriate designs. New Liberty fabric is treated for soil resistance and color fastness and stays vibrant for years. Two sizes: 100" for persons under 5'6", and 110" for those 5'6" or taller. N01

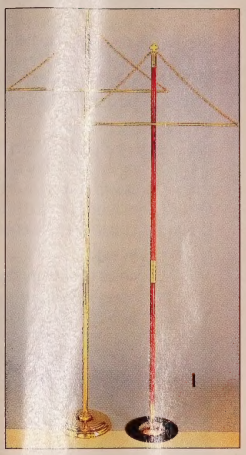
A. **Green: Vine & Fish.** Vine symbolizes learning and Christian growth through the teachings of Christ. Fish symbolizes Christ feeding the multitudes.
SS5-529963. 100". **$98.50**
SS5-521488. 110". **$98.50**

B. **Red: Flame & Dove.** Symbols of the Holy Spirit.
SS5-529952. 100". **$98.50**
SS5-521455. 110". **$98.50**

C. **Blue: Palm Leaf & Crown.** Palm leaf for entrance of royalty. Crown symbolizes birth of the Messiah, Christ the King.
SS5-529996. 100". **$98.50**
SS5-521490. 110". **$98.50**

D. **White: Star Cross & Butterfly.** Star cross symbolizes the birth of Christ. Butterfly symbolizes the Resurrection.
SS5-529974. 100". **$98.50**
SS5-521477. 110". **$98.50**

E. **Purple: Cross & Chalice with Wafer.** Red cross symbolizes the blood of Christ, with white outline for the purity and hope of Christianity. Chalice and wafer symbolize peace and forgiveness of Christ through Communion.
SS5-529985. 100". **$98.50**
SS5-521466. 110". **$98.50**

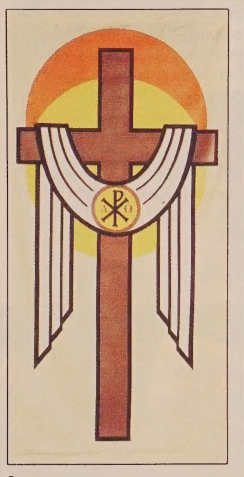


BANNERS

F. **Lamb of God (Lent).**
SS5-280041. 3' x 6'. **$145.00**
SS5-280063. 4' x 10'. **$205.00**

G. **Empty Cross (Easter).**
SS5-280085. 3' x 6'. **$145.00**
SS5-280074. 4' x 10'. **$205.00**

H. **Tree of Life (Kingdomtide).**
SS5-280165. 3' x 6'. **$145.00**
SS5-280154. 4' x 10'. **$205.00**



G

H

F

BANNER STANDS

I. **Steel, Brass & Wood.** Wooden shaft with steel and brass base. Brass rod, chain, and cross. Can be used in processions. S10
SS5-535782. (SB502PR) **$375.00**

J. **Brass.** S10
SS5-535805. (SB500PR) **$525.00**

K-M. LECTERN BANNERS

22" x 40". Designed to match banners F-H shown on this page. Gold fringe at bottom (not shown in illus.). L48. Each, **$85.00**
K. SS5-301851. Lent
L SS5-301862. Easter
M. SS5-301873. Kingdomtide

L

K

M

Confirmation Resources

FOLLOW ME

The primary goal of this official United Methodist resource is to help youth become committed followers of Jesus Christ. Church membership then becomes important as one way of living out their discipleship.

• Creative Activities
Follow Me gets youth involved, participating, and growing in their faith! Active and reflective experiences will maximize learning. Special activities include a service project, retreat, and a Bible fun night that will energize youth.

• Friends in Faith
Adult members of the congregation are invited to share their own faith and spiritually grow themselves by acting as Friends in Faith (mentors) to youth in the *Follow Me* program.

• Modules
Specially designed teaching plans allow you to customize the confirmation experience to fit your youth, your congregation, and your time frame. Thirteen flexible modules allow you to select modules (in any order) for just the basics, or expand your program to last up to two years.

• Basic Resources
Leader's Kit. Everything you need to lead:
— Class Video featuring music, animation, drama, stand-up comedy, and case studies
— Teaching Plans that are easy and effective
— 90-minute Audiocassette is chock-full of ideas and suggestions for effective leadership
— Student Magazine that is big, bright, and bold! This 144-page, four-color magazine challenges teens to be Christian on purpose. "To Be Continued" sections make it appropriate to use with both older and younger youth
— Handbook for adults to help parents and other adults grow by presenting
• the theology of confirmation
• the role of confirmation in church life
• ways to support youth in confirmation
• ideas for building faith in the family
SS5-759269. $34.95

Student Magazine. Every youth will want to have their own copy of the student magazine!
SS5-759277. $5.25

Handbook for Pastors, Parents, and Congregation. Order extras for adult friends in faith, parents, and other church leaders!
SS5-759242. $2.00

Leader in the Church School Today. Look for *Updates* in issues of *Leader in the Church School Today* magazine. New material, new ideas for expansions, helpful planning tips, reports of experiences of other classes — all these insure *Follow Me* will stay current, serving your needs and your youth through the 1990s.
SS5-751624. Spring issue. $3.50
SS5-752152. Summer issue. $3.50

Follow Me Extra Leader Pack. Update the *Follow Me* confirmation curriculum with this supplemental resource. Responsive to the requests of *Follow Me* users, *Follow Me Extra* will allow your students to get even more out of their confirmation experience.
SS5-717043. $2.95

Follow Me Stationery. Package of 100 4-color sheets will help you generate excitement about confirmation while staying in touch with confirmands, parents, and mentors.
SS5-007879. $2.95

TOUCHED BY GRACE

Touched by Grace: Black Methodist Heritage in The United Methodist Church is an exciting confirmation resource for senior highs and adults. In 13 fascinating sessions, participants can know and better understand the heritage and share the faith of African-American persons in The United Methodist Church!

Student Book. Every student will want a personal copy.
SS5-170385. $1.50

Teacher Guide. A clearly written resource that features directions for leading class discussions. Includes enrichment materials.
SS5-170374. $2.00

Media Kit. Materials include posters, spirituals, poetry, readings, and excerpts from "I Have a Dream" on audiocassette; plus moving stories of Thomas Garrett, Harriet Tubman, Phillis Wheatley, Crispus Attucks, Hiram R. Revels, Malcolm X, and others.
Order one for each class.
SS5-170396. $7.75

Confirmation Supplies

CERTIFICATES

A. Foil-stamped
Beautiful pastel foil gives this certificate the look of much more expensive steel-engraved certificates. With matching envelope. A01
SS5-048311. Each, 60¢; 12 for $6.95

B. Frameable
8" x 10". Two colors. Light blue parchment-like background with black letters. A01
SS5-048370. Each, 50¢; 12 for $5.95

C. Steel-engraved
High-quality certificate featuring contemporary-style gold engraving. Printed on smooth white paper, French-folded, with envelope and tissue insert. 5" x 7". A01
SS5-048443. $1.60

D. Confirmation & Reception
Specifically designed for United Methodists, this steel-engraved folder contains the Order for Confirmation and Reception into the Church. With envelope. A01
SS5-050073. 12 for $12.95

E-F. Keepsake Folder/Certificate
Padded, simulated satin cover and delicate full-cover illustration. Includes six pages with certificate, Bible text, and spaces for entry of personal remembrances of the day and photographs. 4½" x 6¾". M22
E. **SS5-307733.** Traditional. Each, **$3.00**
F. **SS5-307722.** Contemporary. Each, **$3.00**

BULLETIN

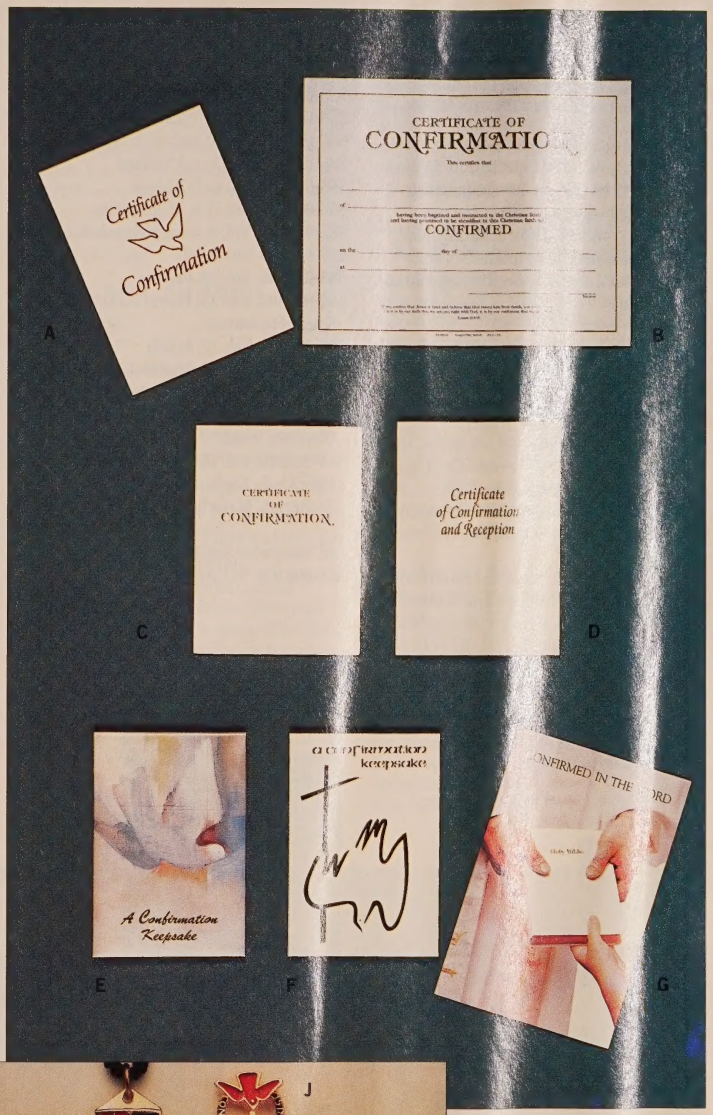
G. Confirmed in the Word. A01
SS5-04393X. 8½" x 11".
100 for **$6.25**; 500 for **$27.00**;
1000 for **$49.00**

JEWELRY

H. Descending Dove Pendant
Heavy polished bronze with multicolored inlays. "Confirmed in Christ" on back. 1½" tall. 33" blue cord. Gift boxed. T04
SS5-067460. $7.50

I-J. Confirmation Lapel Pins
I. Descending Dove.
¾" high. Clutch-back. Boxed. T04
SS5-117758. $3.50

J. Confirmed in Christ.
¾" dia. Clutch-back. Boxed. T04
SS5-500806. $2.50



For confirmation gifts, see page 30.

Basic Bible Commentary

A BASIC COMMENTARY FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF THE BIBLE

Basic Bible Commentary is a beginner's Bible commentary designed especially for teachers who want to be able to communicate key ideas to their students. A basic but not simplistic, commentary on Scripture, *Basic Bible Commentary* helps teachers of adult Sunday school classes know more about the biblical text.

Each volume includes a map of Palestine, the Ancient Near East, or the Eastern Mediterranean; a glossary explaining the meaning of key terms; and a guide to pronunciation of names and key terms. The Commentary uses the NRSV and the NIV. Complete in 29 volumes, *Basic Bible Commentary* is sold in sets (Old Testament and New Testament) or individually.

This reference set is a valuable resource for both Sunday school teachers and students. It is ideal for study groups or for personal use, and is an excellent addition to your personal reference collection or to the church library.

Each 5½" x 8½" paperback volume contains 160 pages of biblical information.

Old Testament

Each, $4.95

SS5-026202. Vol. 1: Genesis
SS5-026210. Vol. 2: Exodus, Leviticus
SS5-026229. Vol. 3: Numbers, Deuteronomy
SS5-026237. Vol. 4: Joshua, Judges, Ruth
SS5-026245. Vol. 5: 1–2 Samuel
SS5-026253. Vol. 6: 1–2 Kings
SS5-026261. Vol. 7: 1–2 Chronicles
SS5-02627X. Vol. 8: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
SS5-026288. Vol. 9: Job
SS5-026296. Vol. 10: Psalms
SS5-02630X. Vol. 11: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
SS5-026318. Vol. 12: Isaiah
SS5-026326. Vol. 13: Jeremiah, Lamentations
SS5-026334. Vol. 14: Ezekiel, Daniel
SS5-026342. Vol. 15: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah
SS5-026350. Vol. 16: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Old Testament Set. 16 volumes.
SS5-008166. $71.95

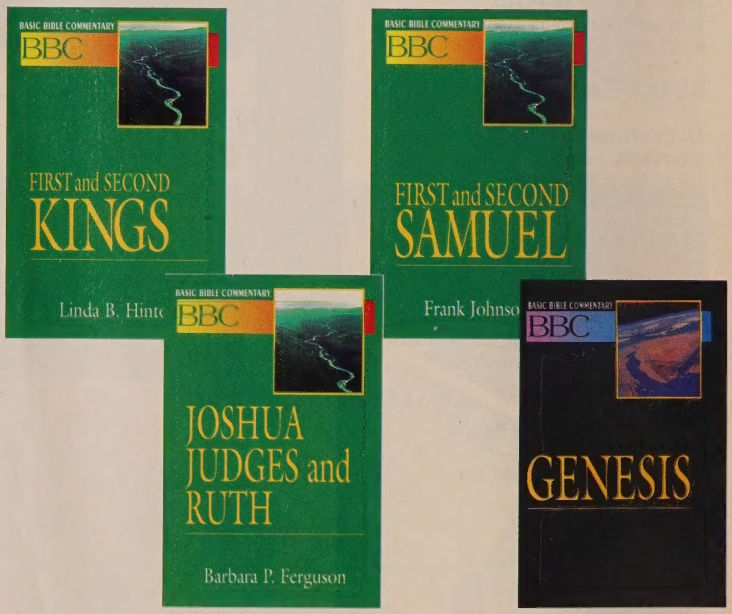
New Testament

Each, $4.95

SS5-026369. Vol. 17: Matthew
SS5-026377. Vol. 18: Mark
SS5-026385. Vol. 19: Luke
SS5-026393. Vol. 20: John
SS5-026407. Vol. 21: Acts
SS5-026423. Vol. 22: Romans
SS5-026431. Vol. 23: 1–2 Corinthians
SS5-02644X. Vol. 24: Galatians, Ephesians
SS5-026458, Vol. 25: Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians
SS5-026466. Vol. 26: 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
SS5-026474. Vol. 27: Hebrews
SS5-026482. Vol. 28: James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude
SS5-026490. Vol. 29: Revelation

New Testament Set. 13 volumes.
SS5-006821. $57.95

ORDER TOLL FREE: 1-800-672-1789



BOOKS FOR FAMILIES

Listening for God
Edited by Paula J. Carlson and Peter S. Hawkins. This collection of stories and essays challenges readers to investigate how life and faith merge in surprising ways and places. *Augsburg*
SS5-519394. Each, $9.99
SS5-519361. Leader's Guide. $2.99

He Was One of Us
Sketches by Rien Poortvliet. This captivating collection of sketches by Dutch artist Poortvliet depicts the life of Jesus from his birth throughout his ministry. Accompanying texts by Hans Bouma. *Baker*
SS5-541885. $24.99

Here and Now
By Henri J. M. Nouwen. Many day-to-day events are packed with meaning and God's presence, yet our busy lives cause us to lose sight of these truths. Nouwen speaks of finding joy in the midst of life's pressures, even during times of grief and suffering. He encourages us to look for God's presence in the everydayness of life. *Crossroad*
SS5-513411. $14.95

This is Christianity
By Maxie Dunnam. For those on the outside looking in, Christianity may offer more questions than answers. Even some on the inside may have questions they hesitate to ask. Dunnam understands the problem and offers clear-cut answers for those who want to know what Christianity is all about. *Abingdon*
SS5-002567. Paper. $7.95
SS5-005450. Leader's Guide. $3.95

The Workbook on Living as a Christian
By Maxie Dunnam. Growing as a Christian doesn't just happen—it requires time and effort. This seven-week, daily program is designed to strengthen your relationship with Jesus. Through reading, reflection, and recording your own thoughts, you will learn that Christianity involves not only doctrine, but relationships, emotions, values, and commitment. *Abingdon*
SS5-00313X. $7.95

BOOKS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Resurrection: Myth or Reality?
By John Shelby Spong. The controversial author of *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* takes a daring look at the very foundation of Christianity. *Harper San Francisco.*
SS5-543235. $11.00

Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching
By John Westerhoff. This resource helps preachers and teachers revitalize their own spiritual lives so they can be more effective in their ministry. Westerhoff calls upon readers to open their imaginations to new images and new ways of knowing God that will lead to a fuller relationship with the Master. *Westminster John Knox.*
SS5-553451. $9.99

Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make
By Hans Frinzel. Poor leadership habits spawn new generations of poor leaders. Frinzel describes the ten most common leadership faux pas, along with case studies and pertinant biblical principles, and suggests ways to turn these negative traits into positive practices. *Victor*
SS5-548501. $16.95

Christ Without Absolutes: A Study of the Christology of Ernst Troeltsch
By Sarah Coakley. This bold study explores the debate between traditionalists and liberals, such as Troeltsch, who would deny that Christians can continue to worship Jesus Christ as the "absolute" revelation of God in this age of historical relativism, an expanding universe, and the impinging of other world faiths on Western culture. Coakley argues that a liberal approach to Christology would open up many new and liberating possibilities for the future of Christianity. *Oxford*
SS5-547142. $17.95

The Gospel According to Judas
By Ray S. Anderson. This book explores several themes—love and betrayal, innocence and guilt, death and resurrection, despair and hope, condemnation and grace, sin and forgiveness—with provocative questions such as: Is there a limit to God's forgiveness? Would even Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, have found forgiveness if he had sought out the very one he betrayed? Are there limits to divine love and grace? *NavPress*
SS5-553187. $10.00

T-SHIRTS

A. Wings as Eagles. Sandwashed charcoal T-shirt. Each, $19.99
SS5-545952. Large
SS5-527111. XL
SS5-527100. XXL

B. United Methodist.
Cross and flame emblem with grapes applique. Ash color, 100% cotton. Reinforced seams. Made in USA. Machine washable. ID1. Each, $22.50
SS5-532562. Medium
SS5-532573. Large
SS5-532584. XL
SS5-532595. XXL

C. United Methodist Custom Designed Shirts.
Ash grey T-shirts and sweatshirts custom made for your church or organization. Minimum order 24 in mixed sizes. Specify name to be embroidered on front band. Maximum 16 letters. Specify sizes and quantity when ordering. Available in S, M, L, XL, or XXL. ID1

Cross and flame with grapes.
SS5-546683. T-shirt. $22.50
SS5-546626. 9 oz. Sweatshirt. $39.95

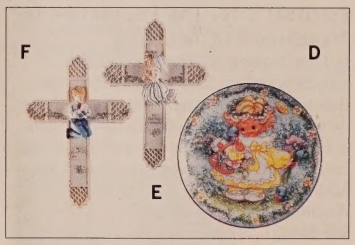
Cross and flame with burgundy and gold diamonds.
SS5-546637. T-shirt. $22.50
SS5-546615. 9 oz. Sweatshirt. $39.95

CONFIRMATION AND COMMUNION GIFTS

D. Decorative Plate.
Barbi Sargent's Tender Expressions. 7½" diameter, gift boxed.
SS5-546158. $29.95

E. First Communion—Girl.
Poly bagged, made of resin material.
SS5-546091. $12.95

F. First Communion—Boy.
Poly bagged, made of resin material.
SS5-546147. $12.95



GRADUATION BOOKS

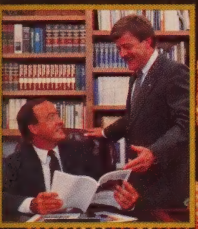
G. Goodbye High School, Hello College.
By William H. Willimon. Drawing on his experience as a college chaplain, Willimon reflects on the new beginnings awaiting high school graduates as they enter college. DG8
SS5-155274. Paper, $9.00

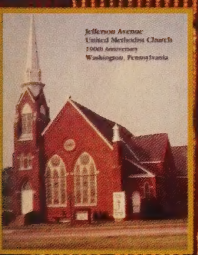
H. You the Graduate.
Revised edition by Harold J. Drown. Making the transition into adulthood isn't easy. These 60 thought-provoking essays offer guidance on using talents, assuming responsibility, and dealing with other aspects of daily living. A01
SS5-46854X. Paper, $7.95

I. On Your Own But Not Alone: Life After College.
By William H. Willimon. Today's college graduates face serious challenges and concerns. Willimon offers encouragement and words of wisdom concerning careers, adult relationships, self-esteem, and spiritual matters. DG8
SS5-155266. Hardcover, $10.00

CALL OR VISIT YOUR COKESBURY STORE

Cokesbury and Olan Mills —
An eight-year alliance. A long-term relationship.





Eight years ago, we at Olan Mills made a promise to Cokesbury. We gave our word that we would do everything in our power to consistently deliver the finest products and services to United Methodist churches. After nearly 2 million sittings, that commitment is still fresh on our minds as we continue to produce the finest church directories and the most beautiful portraiture in the industry.

It's a great feeling to see the fruits of our labor and to hear delighted comments from happy churchgoers. Directories have a way of bringing people together, and we are pleased to have had a small part in strengthening those ties that bind. We enjoy going back to see the pastors and coordinators with whom we have formed relationships. And we treasure our long-term relationship with Cokesbury.

We want you to know that we appreciate your business and, most of all, your continued loyalty.

Cokesbury and Olan Mills — offering *your* United Methodist church the most comprehensive directory service in the business.

Fastest Delivery Time
Unparalleled Customer Service
Beautiful Portraiture — 60 years in the business
Larger Photographs
Latest Technology including Video Image Proofing
Optional phone numbers under photographs
Special Bonuses

Cokesbury
olan mills

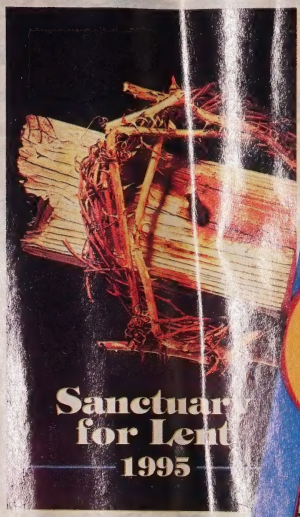
Q1362 ©1994 Olan Mills
#533954

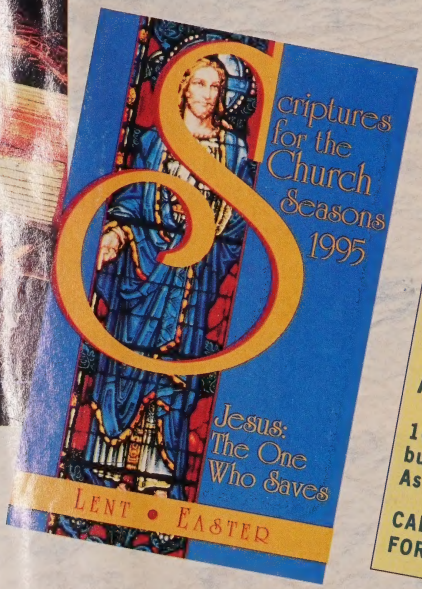
Lenten Resources

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP USE

Sanctuary for Lent, 1995
By Steven K. Brown. Depend on these daily devotions to inspire and encourage church members during the Lent/Easter season. Each devotion begins with a Scripture reading and ends with a prayer. Buy one for every family in your church!
SS5-013313. Each, 40¢; 100 for $40.00

Jesus: The One Who Saves.
Explore the Lenten season as a time of reflection and renewal of faith. Adults are invited to respond to God's great act of grace in sending the One who comes to save human beings from the consequences of sin. The study closes with a celebration of the Resurrection, God's affirmation of the mission and message of Jesus.
SS5-779197. Each, $2.95
6 or more, each, $2.50





COKESBURY SEASONAL SAVIN
FOR YOUR CHURCH

January 1—March 31

10% off Custom Paraments.
Ask for free Paraments Catalog #26245

10% off Pew Cushions.
Ask for free Pew Cushions Packet #2619

Choir Robes Annual Winter Sale!
Great savings on adult and children's robe and accessories.

February 1—April 30

10% off all outdoor church signs and bulletin boards.
Ask for free Church Signs Catalog #263354

CALL TOLL-FREE 1-800-237-7511
FOR COMPLETE DETAILS.

Cokesbury
Division of The United Methodist Publishing House
201 Eighth Avenue South
P.O. Box 801
Nashville, TN 37202-0801

Please route to:

- ☐ Worship Chair
- ☐ Secretary
- ☐ Pastor
- ☐ Music Director
- ☐ Other: _____

E2-0344-1

505303

FROM THE PASTOR

"LAZARUS, COME OUT"

I have been a member of an MCC (N.Y., Boston, Providence, Los Angeles, Ventura, Boston again, Pensacola, and now Mobile) for 13 years, and have been pastoring for 10 of those years -- hence all the moves. I have heard a lot of sermons by a lot of fine preachers, and some of them live in my head and I can almost preach them from heart, because they have had striking meaning for me. One of the most important in my life was a sermon Rev. Dee Jackson, the Black pastor of MCC Alpha and Omega, Brooklyn, New York, preached nearly 11 years ago. Dee's secular job was as a prison matron and she had had a lot of experience with women in prisons -- a lot of them gay women -- who needed to make changes in their lives, and through Dee had been enabled to make those changes.

It was one of those Palm Sundays like most Palm Sundays in New York -- almost cold, with a weak blue sun shining on the city and reflecting off the tall buildings, icy and diamond-like. I had gone home after nearly 12 years in New Orleans, and I missed the azaleas and the warmth of the South, and Brooklyn would never replace the Gulf Coast, and I was feeling a little depressed because it really ought to be spring and it wasn't. But I went to church, mostly because it was Palm Sunday, and I would have missed the excitement and the joy of being there on what had always been for me a kind of special Sunday.

Alpha and Omega met in an old Unitarian Church in Brooklyn Heights, a very bohemian part of Brooklyn with a lot of gay folk living there. The Unitarian Chapel had a wonderful small intimate chapel, which was just about the right size for a new MCC, and A&O had about 20-25 members at that time. Most of them were friends from MCC NY who had moved with Dee when she began the church, and we were excited about a multiracial, bilingual church with a Black woman pastor -- which for its time was a unique kind of church, even for MCC.

Dee was a fine preacher -- she was a soft, warm woman with a gentle voice, but you could feel the strength of her faith under the gentleness. She began that Sunday to preach about Lazarus, and we knew the story. Lazarus was Jesus' friend; the brother of Mary and Martha and the women had sent for Jesus because Lazarus was ill -- dying. But Jesus did not come -- at least not right away. When he finally did approach their home in Bethany, Mary and Martha went out to meet him, and accused him, "If you had come sooner, Lazarus would not have died." Jesus tried to convince them that Lazarus was only sleeping and would awaken. The women though that he meant at the final judgment, but that was little comfort to them. Finally, they arrived where Lazarus was entombed and Jesus ordered the stone to be rolled away from the tomb. "Don't do that, by now he will have begun to decay and stink," was their answer to Jesus. But someone rolled aside the stone, and Jesus stood there, outside the cave, and called into the darkness, "Lazarus, come out." And he came out, alive, whole and renewed.

Dee tied that Bible story to our lives as gay people, "You who are dead, come out." "You who have been buried in fear, come out." "You who have been hiding and trying to play it safe, come out." "Leave you grave, your prison, your closet, and come out." I don't know when I have been more frightened and more moved by a sermon, more touched by a preacher's exortation. I could almost hear the stone rolling away, hear the prison bars rolling back, hear the closet doors opening as the dead part of each of us arose. My closet in those days was deep.

ON PALM SUNDAY

O God of life and of being,
I know how it must have been for those people long ago
who rejoiced when Jesus came to their city
and cried, "Hosanna!"
I know how their hearts swelled with good will
and how happily they threw their hats in the air.
I know, too, when I look within,
how the good will faded,
and the rancorous ill will grew into the cry,
"Crucify him!"
For I, too, am capable of swinging from praise to denial,
from singing to cursing.
I am not always steady and sure in what I want,
in my loves and loyalties.

I can rejoice when it is time for rejoicing,
sing when it is time for singing,
and praise when it is time for praising.
And I can be grateful that when I forget you
and follow less worthy inclinations,
you do not forget me.
O Lord, I wish you did not have to haul me back so often
from my erring ways.
But I am grateful that you do,
and that your love is as persistent as it is.
Give me more of the flavor of your kind of love in my life,
so that I can be more open to others,
more creative and responsive to the beauty and splendor
that life can afford.
Since you refuse to give up on me,
help me to refuse to give up on myself.

As I move toward the celebration of the great, glad news of Easter,
lift up my heart, my whole life. *Amen.*

FOR EASTER SUNDAY

Christ is risen!
Thanks be to you, O God,
who has raised him from the dead,
and who, with him, has raised me from the darkness into light,
from trembling into hope,
from forlornness and forsakenness
into acceptance and restoration.
I am grateful, O God.
Sometimes I forget,
and live as though the tomb were sealed
and the stone in place.
But on this day I remember
and am ashamed that I live such an unresurrected life
so much of the time.

Help me in remembering to feel the touch of resurrection within,
to hear the voices of angels and the wild whispers of faith,
that because he lives I shall live also.
I shall live with a new shining
upon the dark places of hurt and heartache.
I shall live with a new vision of what it means
to see daily existence glimmering
in the light of an eternal purpose.
I shall live, not cringing in fear and abject in sorrow,
but renewed in hope and assurance.

I confess how often I am ensnared
by the despair of this ofttimes desperate world.
I read of wars and of hatreds among people,
of the death visited upon human spirits
by the frustrations and angers
of a world of conflict and injustice.
I feel the tensions of misunderstanding and estrangement.
I touch broken things in my own life,
touch them gingerly for the hurt remains,
and the bitterness lurks close to the surface.
I cannot be put off with easy answers to hard questions.
I resent pretense and suspect piety.

My heart lies abed from sheer inertia,
and my spirits remain indoors with the shades drawn.
I am afraid to venture out into life and love.
Then the cry is raised:

"Christ is Risen!"
"He is risen from the dead."

And suddenly I feel the thrill and the exhilaration
of this Eastertime.

So I ask this day for a new beginning for myself.
I admit I have asked it before,
and then slid rapidly back into the old unresurrected ways.
But I ask it again:
O Lord, make this a day of resurrection for me,
a day of new beginnings,
a day of new commitment.
Raise my spirit from its tomb of selfishness and greed,
from its burial cloths of pride and arrogance.
Free me into the resurrection life our Lord has promised.

Let me hear the thunder and the whisper,
the trumpet and the far-off music
of the life yet to be in him.
Thanks be to you, O God,
through the Risen Christ. *Amen*.

I had been working for many years with Southern Baptist churches, and my secular job at that time was as a schoolteacher, and nothing was more frightening than the thought of not being able to teach again. But something more was happening in me -- my faith was growing. I think that Sunday I realized that I could have turned a deaf ear to that sermon, not heard its message for me, and stayed buried in my closet. But the Christ was calling to me, "Lazarus, come out," and I had to answer "I will," because if I hadn't the stone would have rolled back, the prison bars on my life would have clanked shut, and I would have remained in buried in my closet.

It's Easter, and for many of us in MCC, the resurrection of Christ, just as the resurrection of Lazarus was 11 years ago, is a metaphor for "coming out." My life has been renewed by the coming of Easter each year, and the resurrection of Christ tells me that there is newness of life, new beginnings, a fresh start, and always the possibility of "coming out," to friends, family, loved ones. With each "coming out" there is a new taste of freedom, and new sense of courage, and new strength. Lazarus came out and was fed and strengthened and began his life anew in Christ. When we "come out" we take those same steps, and always Jesus is there, holding out a hand, reaching for us, and enabling us to become new persons in Christ. Hear the voice of Jesus calling from outside your cave, your prison, your closet, "Come out!"

Happy Easter. "Come out."

RESURRECTION

To resurrect or not to resurrect: that is the question. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," that is the answer. Christ powerfully invites us in the tide of Easter to swim through death into new life. Each year his Paschal message and example is to die anew, in order to spring forth with new fruit.

Like Christ, the true persons, the lively individuals are those who risk and sacrifice, who give as much of themselves as others can receive at each moment. Through Christ's eyes they see the unique versions of infinite truth, goodness and beauty which makes all people worthy of reverential response. They welcome the joy and love, without fearing the hurt or humiliation, the rejection or ridicule which may greet their self-giving. For they desire alwys to be open to the dynamic, if sometimes painful, transformation into Christ which results from such self-offering.

They don't settle for cautious nesting on their small collection of "certainties, securities and private revelations." They cooperate with each experience, growing and expanding with every person and situation that God offers them. They will even sonsent to the dismemberment of their personal philosophy, horrendous as this may prove to be, if someone else's discovery or criticism offers a truer grasp of reality.

And they live this way until the day on which they die, when they welcome the most radical change into a higher knowing and loving. Thus, their lives are consistent with the supreme dynamism and transfiguration of death. For they will never have shared in the degrading parody of death in which so many stagnant and devitilized people "live." They say YES!, always YES! to Christ's Easter questions of death, resurrection and life.

Greg Strickland, from WINGS OF THE EAGLE
Newsletter of MCC Keys of the Kingdom,
Key West, Florida.

P.O. Box 33637
Raleigh, N.C
27636

RALEIGH, NC 276
PM
28 DEC
1994

RESEARCH TRIANGLE AREA
RALEIGH DURHAM
CHAP

Rev. Marge Ragona
Covenant MCC
PO Box 101473
Birmingham, AL 35210

What Do I See at Calvary

A Children's Book
for Lent
by Arden W. Mead

THE ROAD AHEAD

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem," Jesus says. The season of Lent is like a journey. Today we take the first steps. Keep your eyes open as we travel!

By the way, **Sundays** are different. Even in Lent, Sundays remind us of Easter. Therefore, on Sundays instead of "looking around" as we do during the rest of the week, we will be "looking ahead" at the things we will see when our trip to Calvary is finished. On Sundays we will also have special things to talk about or do.

At the end of the road is the open tomb, and that gives us a whole new way of seeing everything!

Open my eyes, Lord Jesus, that I may see all the wonderful things you did for me. Show me what to see. Amen.

DONKEY

Look! The first thing we see on the road to Calvary is an animal. "The Master needs it," the owner was told, and so Jesus was able to borrow it. Could we call it a "borrowed burro"?

Is there anything the Lord asks of you? Time? Skills? Voice? Participation? Friendliness?

Do you suppose someone might have said, "Aw, the Lord could never use something as humble as that." Oh, yes he could! Oh, yes he does!

Lord Jesus, open my eyes to see the things you need. And open my heart to let you borrow them. Amen.

PALM BRANCHES

Look there on the road to Jerusalem where Jesus is riding that borrowed burro. Why are people waving palm branches?

It's a celebration, the kind of celebration that would happen if a king were riding by.

Jesus really is a king, of course, the King of everything. He really is.

If Jesus came riding by where you live, what would you do to welcome him as King? Is there anything you can do to let others know he is really the King, even if he doesn't ride by?

King Jesus, welcome! Come into my home, my heart, my life. I'm glad you found the way. Amen.

UPPER ROOM

Look at this room at the top of the stairs. What do you suppose it had been used for before?

But look at it now. Something special is going to happen here, and so from now on the room will be special too. This is where Jesus could share with his friends.

Do you have a special place where you and Jesus can share? Home? Church? Where? Maybe it's *your* room!

Lord Jesus, wherever I can be with you becomes a special place. Help me to look for you everywhere. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEE...

AN ANGEL

On Sundays in Lent we look ahead, to see where the season ends. So look ahead. Can you see an angel?

Right now the angels would still be waiting ... waiting to tell the good news, the best good news of all.

Do you know what that message is? Do you suppose the angels were so excited to share the news that they almost couldn't stand it?

Lord Jesus, thank you for your angels who watch over me. Help me to look forward to all the good news you have to share. Amen.

What is the best secret you ever wanted to share? How long did you have to wait to share it?

A TOWEL

Look at that towel just lying there ... and that bowl of water. Everyone's feet need washing, but nobody wants to do the dirty work. Everyone is looking at everyone else.

Finally Jesus takes the towel and the bowl and washes the disciples' feet.

It's like "Who's going to take out the trash?" or "Who's going to clean up when someone breaks a dozen eggs?" Do you think Jesus would? Would you?

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for humbling yourself so that I might be clean from all sin. Make me willing to serve as you did. Amen.

PASSOVER MEAL

This is a special night, different from all others. A night for *remembering*. Look at the table in this upper room. The different foods eaten here remind people how their ancestors had suffered in slavery, suffered bitterly. But there is more: the whole meal is a celebration, a "salvation celebration." Remember how God saved them. Remember how God saved *us*.

That's a good lesson. Remember what you have learned about God from your parents and others who have gone before you. Learn from it. And trust the Lord as they did!

Lord Jesus, you have given me so much to remember. Thank you for remembering me! Amen.

BREAD AND CUP

Look closely at the table. The bread and cup had been there all the time, at every Passover celebration, but now they are given special meaning, because of what Jesus says: "Take this ... do this ... remember this ..."

Know me ... trust me ... follow me.

These are things we've known for a long time, but now we are invited to understand them in an even deeper, fuller way.

The next time you see bread and cup on the altar in your church, pay attention. In these old familiar signs Jesus is showing you something NEW!

What special gifts you give to your people, Lord Jesus! What special love you have to share! Amen.

OLIVE TREES

Olive trees can live to be very old. Some of the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus went after eating the Passover meal, might have been young saplings when David passed that way a thousand years before! A lot of history happened in those years. If olive trees could see—and talk—they'd have a lot to share.

Look at those trees, and let them remind you that you are not alone. For hundreds of years—thousands of years!—people like us have been learning about Jesus' suffering. Trees can't talk, but people can.

Listen—like when your pastor talks—and share.

I'm listening, Lord Jesus. Keep sending people to speak to me. Amen.

A Rock

Look, by that rock. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus is kneeling to pray. He asks if things might be different. The answer is NO. "Thy will be done," he prays.

Then he becomes like a rock. Nothing will be able to budge him from doing the heavenly Father's holy will, all the way to death.

"A wise person builds not on sand but on a rock," Jesus taught. We are wise to build on him who stood so firm for us that he prayed, "Thy will be done"—and then did it.

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee. Amen.

SWEAT

Have you ever heard the expression, "That person never broke a sweat"? It means someone didn't try very hard.

But see what is happening here in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus' sweat is like great drops of blood falling on the ground. Jesus is working hard.

Sometimes people sweat from *playing* hard, but this is no game. This is the real thing, and it is work, hard work!

But Jesus is doing a good job. Just look at the sweat on the ground.

Lord Jesus, even when it isn't easy, help me to say, "Thy will be done"—and then to *do* it. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEE...

A GARDEN

On Sundays in Lent we look ahead, to see where the season ends. Can you look far enough ahead to see a garden outside of Jerusalem? It's almost like a park. with lovely trees and shrubs and flowers.

Almost like the Garden of Eden, isn't it? The Garden of Eden was a place of new beginnings for the human race. This garden will be a place of new beginnings too. Do you know why?

Lord Jesus, you promised that the thief on the cross next to you would be with you in Paradise. That must be a lovely place. I can hardly wait. Amen.

Plant some seeds in pots or milk cartons and watch them grow. Or plant grass seed (or wheat) in a tin pie plate. See how long it takes to grow. That many days before Easter, plant more, so that it will be ready to hide the colored Easter eggs.

Thirty Pieces Of Silver

Was Judas greedy? Or was he foolish? Certainly Jesus is worth more than thirty pieces of silver! If anyone asks, "How much can I pay you to go to hell instead of heaven?" what would you answer? *No price* is worth that, is it?

But are you ever tempted like that? Eve and Adam were tempted to disobey God's will for a piece of fruit. What tempts you?

Remember the price *Jesus* paid for you! You are worth more than thirty pieces of silver to him!

Lord Jesus, you are a priceless treasure. Help me always to realize how much you mean to me. Amen.

TORCHES

Here they come with torches seeking Jesus in the darkness of the Garden of Gethsemane. They wouldn't need torches, for Jesus is the Light of the world. He told them so: "I was always where you could find me." He still is.

And if we need some kind of torch to help us, we have one: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

Look! You'll always find him waiting to be your Savior.

Lord Jesus, shine in my heart so that I may let my own light shine for everyone to see. Amen.

PETER'S SWORD

When Jesus was being captured in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter pulled out a sword to defend his master. (Today he might have pulled out a gun.) Jesus told him not to do that: "Put that sword away." People can get hurt when weapons are used, he said. People can die!

Peter would have to find a better way to be a friend of Jesus. There *are* better ways. We can find them too.

Lord Jesus, you suffered all that punishment so that we might be free. Help me especially to be free from getting even. Amen.

A Rope

Do you see what they are doing with a rope here in the Garden of Gethsemane? They are using it to tie Jesus up. They don't have to do that; Jesus suffers willingly.

They're treating him like an animal, like a dog on a leash. Do you ever treat Jesus like an animal: "You've *got* to do this!"?

Jesus doesn't need a leash. He promises to come with us always. After all, he came all the way to earth ... and to Gethsemane and on to Calvary ... for you!

Follow on!

I promise to follow you, Lord Jesus. Keep leading me, gently but firmly. I know you know the way. Amen.

LINEN CLOTH

When Jesus was arrested, one young man ran away in such a hurry that he left behind the only thing he was wearing—a linen cloth. That must have been embarrassing, don't you think?

Or maybe it's more embarrassing to be running away from Jesus. Have you ever done that? Can you imagine being more ashamed of Jesus than of being naked in a crowd?

Lord Jesus, you are not ashamed of me. You call me by my name and welcome me into your family. Help me to show how proud I am to have you as my Savior. Amen.

CHARCOAL FIRE

Do you see that fire here in the high priest's courtyard? And is that the disciple Peter standing there trying to keep warm with all those other people? Be careful, Peter! Jesus warned you would be tempted to deny him. Be careful!

Does that ever happen to you? You think you're just part of the friendly group ... and then temptation happens ... and before you know it, you may be doing something you know you shouldn't, maybe even something you have been warned against and promised you would never do. Careful!

Thank you for the warnings you give me, Jesus. Help me choose my companions wisely. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEE ...

THE TOMB

On Sundays in Lent we look ahead, to see where the season ends. Take another look at that garden near Jerusalem. Do you see a tomb in it? That tomb is still empty as we look at it this week. No one has been buried in it yet. It is still waiting, just as we are.

Nobody knows it yet, but that is going to become the most famous tomb in the whole world!

And the most important one.

Lord Jesus, the tomb could not hold you forever. And because of what happened there, I know that I will rise to live forever too. Amen.

Have you ever been to a cemetery? Was it like a park ... or a flower garden? What did you like about it? Was there anything you didn't like?

A ROOSTER

Jesus had warned, and it had happened. Peter had done what he said he never would. And now the rooster crowed, the way roosters often crow to wake up the world.

And Peter woke up ... realized what he had done ... and was sorry. Just as dawn marks the beginning of a new day, the crowing of the rooster marked the beginning of a whole new way of life for Peter.

How does God call *you* when you are being tempted? How does God invite you back when you have failed?

Listen ... and turn!

Lord Jesus, even when I fail, you call me back again. Forgive my sins, I pray, and help me live the new life you are giving me. Amen.

The Noose Of Judas

Do you see that noose? It tells a terrible story. Judas felt so bad about what had happened that he went out and hanged himself. He probably felt there was no other way.

Judas was wrong. Suicide is never the answer. Just as Jesus forgave Peter and helped him put his life back together, his love and power were there for Judas too.

Judas chose the noose instead. And he was wrong.

Lord Jesus, you are always—ALWAYS!—ready to forgive and to offer another chance. Always!!! Amen.

"The Pavement"

The place where Roman trials took place in Jerusalem was called "The Pavement"—and that's where Jesus was brought to stand trial before Pontius Pilate. It was a kind of outdoor courtroom.

It is strange that Jesus should be standing trial, for on the Last Day Jesus will be the Judge ... and *we* must all stand before *him*.

"The Pavement" was hard. The judgment was harder. It was unfair.

When Jesus comes to judge, he will do it right. We can count on that.

Judge Jesus, I throw myself on the mercy of the court. Amen.

WHIP

"You deserve a whipping!" Did you ever read that line in a story or see it on a TV show? Usually the person doesn't really *deserve* a whipping. Certainly not a *whipping*. Certainly not the cruel kind Jesus got!

Jesus certainly didn't deserve a whipping either. He was perfect and holy.

Are you perfect and holy? What do you think you deserve from Jesus? What does Jesus actually give you instead?

Lord Jesus, you deserve the very best that I can give you. Amen.

Crown of Thorns

It was a cruel thing to do, to make a crown out of sharp thorns and then pound it onto Jesus' head. That must have hurt a lot.

But what hurt even more was knowing that he deserved a different crown—the finest one of all. For Jesus is the King of everything. And he promises to give everyone who trusts in him a crown of everlasting life.

To make that possible, he wore that awful crown for you.

King Jesus, I can hardly wait to see the crown of everlasting life you have waiting for me! Amen.

PITCHER AND BOWL

Do you see that bowl of water over there? It is a kind of wash basin. After he condemned Jesus to die on the cross, Pontius Pilate washed his hands. Pilate said that washing his hands showed that he was innocent.

But just washing your hands doesn't make it so—and just saying it doesn't make it so either. Pilate was still guilty of condemning an innocent man to die.

What Pilate needed was a clean *heart*. Jesus died to make that possible.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God," we pray, because that's what we need too.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Wash me, and I shall be purer than snow. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEE...

SPICES

As Jesus was taken from the courtroom and led out to Calvary, do you suppose he passed by a shop that sold spices? Could he have passed by the very shop where Nicodemus would purchase the myrrh and aloes he would use to prepare Jesus' body for burial?

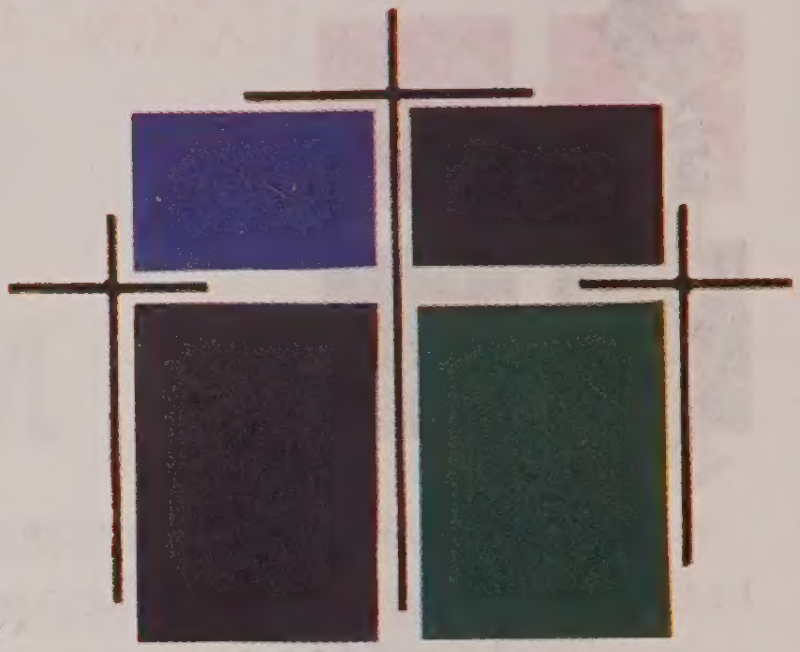
Jesus was probably too busy to notice the aroma as he passed, but on Sundays in Lent we can take the opportunity to look ahead, to see where the season ends.

Do you ever wonder what *heaven* will smell like?

Lord Jesus, are there times when you think the world *stinks*? I'm sorry for my part in that. Amen.

Make a potpourri bag. Put nice smelling things like cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg, into a piece of cloth. Then tie the cloth shut with a ribbon, and put it in a drawer or a kitchen cabinet. Every time you smell it, remember that Easter is coming.

THE CROSS



We're getting closer now, almost close enough to see Mount Calvary. Already, on the way, we can see the cross. Jesus is being forced to carry it on his way to Calvary. It is a heavy burden. Look, it's becoming too heavy. Someone else is being called on to help, a man named Simon from Cyrene.

Have you ever wondered if there's anything *you* can do to help Jesus?

There is. He tells us, "Whatever you do for one of these, my brothers and sisters, you do it to me." Maybe we can help someone carry a burden.

Lord Jesus, when my burdens are heavy, I know you are there to help me bear them. You never let me down. Amen.

SOLDIERS

The soldiers you see at Calvary were just "doing their job"—and sometimes that is unpleasant. Unpleasant jobs need to be done, and the people who do them have to be careful that they don't become unpleasant too. John the Baptist once warned soldiers not to take bribes and not to be unjustly cruel (the way these soldiers were with their crown of thorns).

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them." By the time Jesus died, one of the soldiers, the centurion, would have seen enough to confess, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Do you think he realized that *Jesus'* "job" was dying for the sins of the world?

Lord Jesus, thank you for forgiving people, even when they don't know that they are hurting you. Thank you for forgiving me! Amen.

GALL

Before they nailed him to the cross, the soldiers offered Jesus drugged wine, so that he wouldn't feel the pain so badly.

But Jesus refused the drugs. He just said no.

Instead, he suffered fully and consciously. He knew what he was doing and he knew why. Jesus didn't die with his brains scrambled or his senses dulled.

He died for us—and he knew it.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE HAMMER

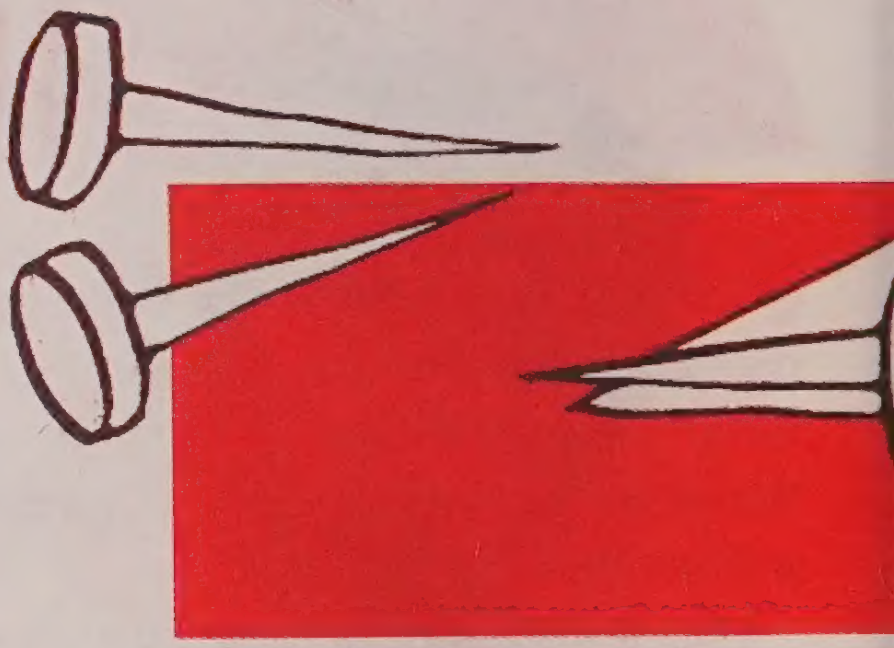
Since Jesus grew up in the home of a carpenter, he certainly knew how to use a hammer. A hammer is a basic construction tool, especially useful for getting things put together properly. Carpenters are builders, and builders use hammers.

Was Jesus building something? "I go to prepare a place for you," he said, "in my Father's house."

Look at the hammer at the foot of the cross. Maybe it can help us picture Jesus as the Master Builder. Even dying on the cross, Jesus was at work for us!

What does your Father's house look like, Jesus? And what does the place you have prepared for me look like? I'm sure I'll like it very much. Amen.

NAILS



Nails held Jesus fast. He wouldn't have needed them. Nails caused him pain. He wouldn't have needed that. Nails made him bleed. He could have lived without that. Yes, he could have *lived* ...

He didn't need any of that. Did Jesus endure the nails because *we* needed something?

Lord Jesus, you don't need anything, because everything is yours. But you know what I need, even better than I do. Please keep providing me with what I really need. Amen.

The Sign Over The Cross

The sign over Jesus' head on the cross proclaims him "the King of the Jews." The people who wrote the sign thought they were making fun of Jesus by writing that. But it is really true. Jesus is the King of the Jews ... and much more. In fact, Jesus is the King of *everything!*

If you were asked to make the sign that would hang over Jesus' head on the cross, what would it say?

Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above!
Oh, gratefully sing his power and his love! Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEE...

THE SHROUD

When Jesus was born, he was wrapped in swaddling clothes—almost like a Christmas present for the world, waiting to be unwrapped.

And now, as we look ahead on this Sunday in Lent, we see a shroud, that linen cloth waiting to wrap Jesus again when he is buried in the garden tomb.

Nobody knows yet that these wrappings will come off too—the Lord has another gift to give the world!

How happy we were to celebrate Christmas, Lord Jesus. Make us just as happy to celebrate Easter ... and for all the right reasons. Amen.

On Easter Sunday, most people wear the very best clothes they have when they go to church. Do you know now what you will be wearing for Easter?

The Seamless Robe

When the time came for the soldiers to divide Jesus' belongings, they didn't want to tear his robe because it was so perfect just the way it was. Look at that robe now. In a way, it can remind us that what Jesus provides to "cover" us is perfect too. It will do the job.

When Adam and Eve had sinned and then realized that they were naked, they tried to make something to cover themselves. But what they made was just not enough. The Lord himself had to provide.

Jesus' forgiveness can cover us completely, like a perfect robe.

Forgive me, Lord Jesus, and cover me with your perfect goodness. Amen.

THE DICE

While Jesus was dying on the cross, the soldiers gambled for his seamless robe because they didn't want to tear it. One soldier would be a winner that day, and everyone else would be a loser. Which would win? Well, that's the way gambling is—you can never be *sure*.

The salvation God offers us through Jesus' blood is no gamble, though. To the thief on the right Jesus said, "*Truly*, I tell you, you will be with me in paradise." That promise is true for us too. You can bet on it!

Lord Jesus, you gave up everything you had so that I might have everything you came to give. Thank you for that "sure thing"! Amen.

Deep Darkness

It wasn't supposed to be dark that time of day. But it was. When Jesus died, it was as if nature hid its face and said, "Don't look too closely at what's happening. Look at the darkness instead, and know how serious this is."

Does it sound strange to say, "Look at the darkness"? When it's dark, you have to imagine. Sometimes things are even clearer in your mind when you have to concentrate like that.

Don't be afraid of the dark. Jesus is the Light of the world. The darkness won't last forever.

Lord Jesus, shine in my heart and drive away every kind of darkness. Amen.

Nothing But Silence

Silence is not something you *see*. Come to think of it, it's not something you *hear* either. It's what you *don't* hear.

Jesus prayed, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" and right then there was no answer. Just silence.

We know the answer, though. God let Jesus be forsaken so that we would never have to be! "Be still," God said once in the Psalms, "and know that I am God."

Speak to me in the silence, Lord. Even there let me hear your voice. Amen.

MARY

Jesus' mother was there when he was crucified. Can you imagine what she must have felt? Maybe right then she was remembering when Jesus was born, and when he was growing up. How young and happy and full of life he was then. And now she sees him bruised and dying.

That must have been hard for her.

When Mary was first told that she would become the mother of the Son of God, she had to trust God's promises.

Our Lord's mother would live to see more promises fulfilled, the kind a mother would understand. When the terrible hurt is over, there will be wonderful joy.

Lord Jesus, when I am impatient—especially when I hurt—help me to *wait* for the blessing you have promised. Amen.

The Beloved Disciple

Even though her son was dying, Mary was not alone. The Lord provided someone else to care for her. "Behold your mother," Jesus said from the cross to his beloved disciple John. And to his mother he said, "Behold your son." Mary would not be left alone.

You're never alone either. God gives people other people—family, classmates, church members, neighbors. How kind of God to provide so lovingly!

Do you know anyone who seems to be alone? Is the Lord giving you to that person?

Thank you, dear Lord, for all the caring people you have given me. Help me to be caring too. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEE...

STONE AND SEAL

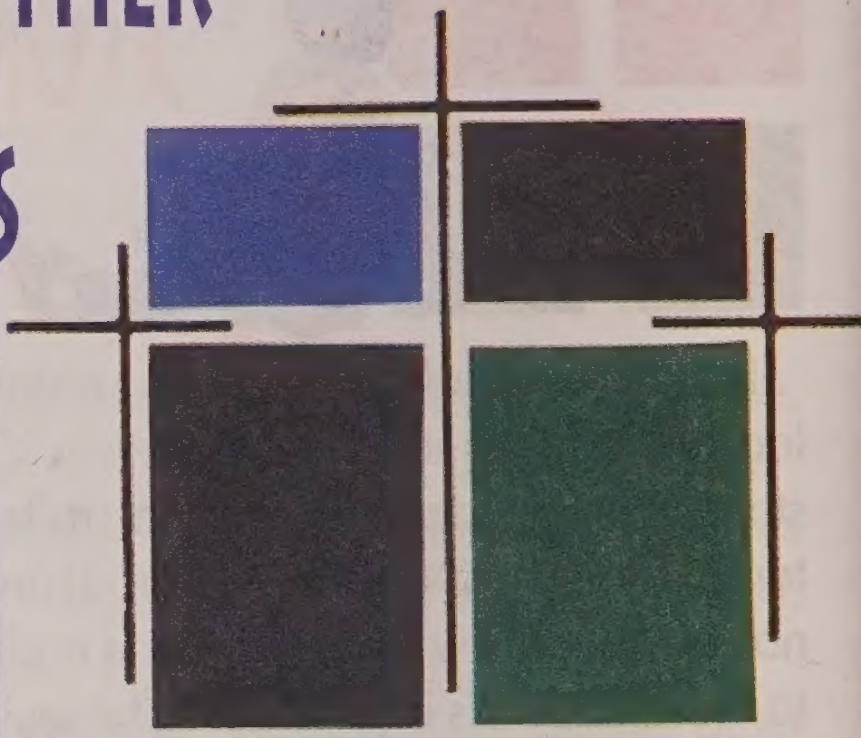
It's the last Sunday in Lent, one more opportunity to look ahead to where the story ends. Can you see the stone in that garden, waiting to be rolled in front of the tomb? And then a seal will be placed on it, to make sure no one tampers with it. The stone is almost too heavy to move once it is in place, and the seal is official. That should be the end of the story.

But a seal can't keep God out ... and a stone can't keep Jesus in! Just watch.

Lord Jesus, even as I look toward the end of the story, you promise that my story will never end. Hosanna!

If you wanted to block a door where you live so that nobody could get through, what is the heaviest thing in your home that could be put in front of that door?

Two Other Crosses



Even dying, Jesus could not be alone. Often during his ministry people crowded around for help and healing. And now another calls for help, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power."

Even dying, Jesus took the time to listen and to care. If he cared that much *even dying,* how much more can he care for us since he is risen from the dead!

Lord Jesus, because you cared enough to join me in my life and death, I know that I will never be alone. Amen.

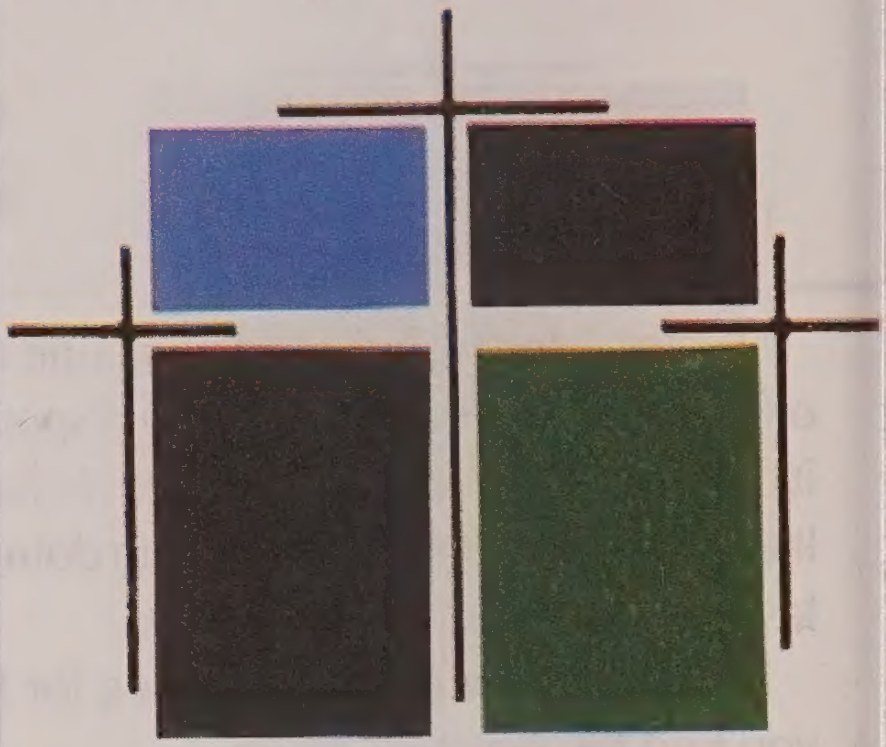
A SPONGE

"I thirst," Jesus said. And someone found a way to offer him something, by wetting a sponge and putting it on the end of a long stick for him to have a tiny drink. It wasn't much, but it was a way of doing something for Jesus.

Have you ever done something for Jesus? How did you find the way?

Lord Jesus, I know that whatever I can do for you is only something little; I'm not able to do big things yet. Thank you for accepting what I can do. Amen.

THE SPEAR



A soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' side to make sure he was really dead.

He really was. And that's important, for Jesus is "the Lamb of God," and lambs needed to die for the sacrifices to be right.

So the spear becomes proof that Jesus did it right. Good news: the sacrifice worked!

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world. Have mercy on us. Grant us peace. Amen.

The Curtain Of The Temple

When Jesus died, the great curtain in the temple, the one that hid the Most Holy Place from view, was torn in two, from top to bottom, as if to say, "God is not a secret any more. Now anyone can draw near to him."

Look at Jesus on the cross and you can see exactly how much God cares for you, how much God wants you as his own. The way is open; you can draw near!

Lord Jesus, what I can see at Calvary is like an open door. You said, "I am the door"—I come to the Father by you. Amen.

BLOOD

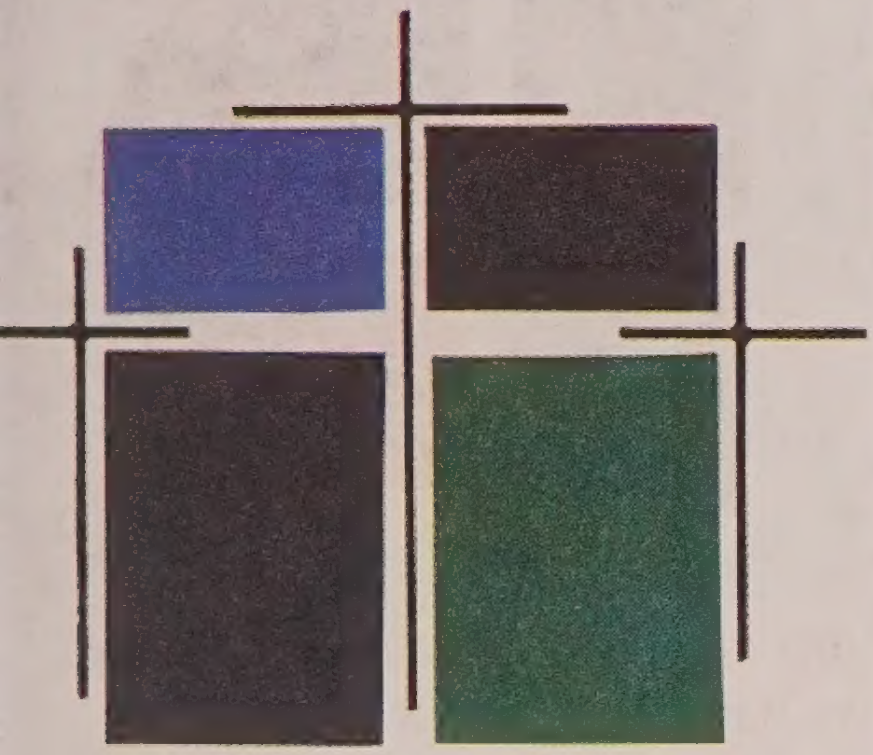
What do you see at Calvary? There has been blood everywhere along the way. Blood flowed when Jesus was whipped, when he was crowned with thorns, when he was nailed to the cross, and when the spear was thrust into his side. A lot of blood was shed.

The Bible says, "The blood of Jesus Christ makes us clean from all our sins," and people in heaven are described in picture language as "those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white."

There is a lot of blood at Calvary. But none of it is yours! Isn't that wonderful?!

Lord Jesus Christ, your blood was shed for me! Amen.

The Empty Cross



The cross is empty now. The crowds have left the hill, and it is quiet here. It's almost as if everything is over. There is nothing more to see at Calvary.

Or is this silence an emptiness that is waiting to be filled? Has the story ended? Or is it just beginning?

I already know the answer, because I know what day tomorrow is!

This is a day of rest and waiting, Jesus Christ, just like a quiet tomb. But when the rest and waiting are over, the glory can begin! Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY ..... READ 1 PETER 1:3-5

LOOKING FORWARD TO SEE...

HEAVEN

Can you look that far ahead? Because of all we've seen this Lent, we have God's word that heaven is something we will see too.

That is where it all leads. The road that led to Calvary didn't end there. It didn't even end when Jesus' tomb was opened and he was alive again.

It won't end until everybody's grave is opened. And for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ and followed him all their lives, it won't end even then!

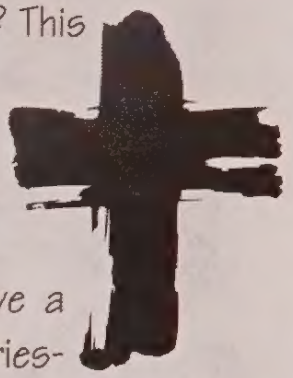
ALLELUIA!

What Do I See At Calvary—A Children's Book For Lent was written by Arden W. Mead with art by Sally Beck, and is published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. ©Copyright 1995. All rights Reserved. Printed in the USA. KL-C

TURN NOT FROM HIS GRIEFS AWAY

A SCRIPTURAL JOURNEY THROUGH LENT

REND YOUR HEARTS, NOT YOUR GARMENTS



How shall we begin our Scriptural Journey through Lent? This dark, purple season is a time for reflection, meditation and repeptance. It is a journey toward the cross—and beyond. And so, we begin our journey with a simple word—repent. Turn away from sin. Turn toward God. Several hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel gave a warning to the citizens of Israel.. **(Joel 2:1-17)** *It is a centuries-old tradition to begin the season of Lent with this message. The people of God need to examine themselves. Are we right with God? Have we been faithful?*

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.... "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.... Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast.... Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD." (NIV)

What do you feel is the connection between what people do (tearing their clothes, fasting, receiving ashes on the forehead) and heartfelt repentance? What can others see in your behavior that says something about your relation to your Lord?

Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me another chance each day to return to you, leaving behind whatever is harmful to my life and to our relationship. Forgive my willfulness. Turn my heart to love you. And send me opportunities to give love and gifts of love, as I set aside time this Lent to recall your life of service. Amen.

REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM HAS COME NEAR

Jesus' career began in the shadow of a fiery preacher who called a nation to repentance—John the Baptizer. Today we might dismiss such a character as mentally ill. But in Jesus' day such prophets were not uncommon; the people understood that their rough manners were part of the role they played in a divine drama. But who would listen? Who today takes seriously the call to turn from greed and devotion to our personal gods, misuse of our bodies, abuse of people and drugs, bigotry and oppression? **(Matthew 3:1-10)**

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' " Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (NRSV)

Imagine that you are John the Baptizer. How would you say today what he was trying to say to the people of his day? John turns to the "church people." What does his challenge say to you as a Christian?

Lord God, I confess that I am not worthy to be called a child of yours. But I come to you, sorry for my sins. Thank you for reaching down to me with salvation and love. Amen.

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

Stepping out from relative obscurity, Jesus responded to John's call to be baptized as a sign of obedience to God. John knew Jesus and understood that Jesus and his mission would eventually overshadow him. What happened next may have shocked bystanders, but it confirmed what John and Jesus already knew—and sealed their fate as servants of God. **(Matthew 3:11-17)**

"I [John] baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." (NRSV)

It has been said that every person sees Jesus a little differently. Look at how John describes him. The Father's voice from heaven, described Jesus from another view, one that seems to emphasize Jesus' relation—and faithful obedience—to his Father. Try to put into words your picture of Jesus; what about him seems most important to you? In the weeks ahead we will see what Jesus himself considered most important.

Jesus, I submit my life to you, for you are my Lord and have redeemed me. My life is all I have to give you. Inspire and empower me with your Spirit, so that I may live as your beloved child. Amen.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL REST ON HIM

In the centuries before Jesus stepped into the water of the Jordan River to be baptized, a handful of prophets for the Lord God preached in streets or in the palaces. Their messages had in common two things: they called a wayward society back to a right relation to the Lord and held out the promise of forgiveness and healing by the heavenly Father. Some of the prophets, like Isaiah in today's reading **(Isaiah 11:1-5)**, even described in graphic word pictures someone who would be the Lord's chosen servant, showing the way and enduring even suffering in order to save God's wayward people.

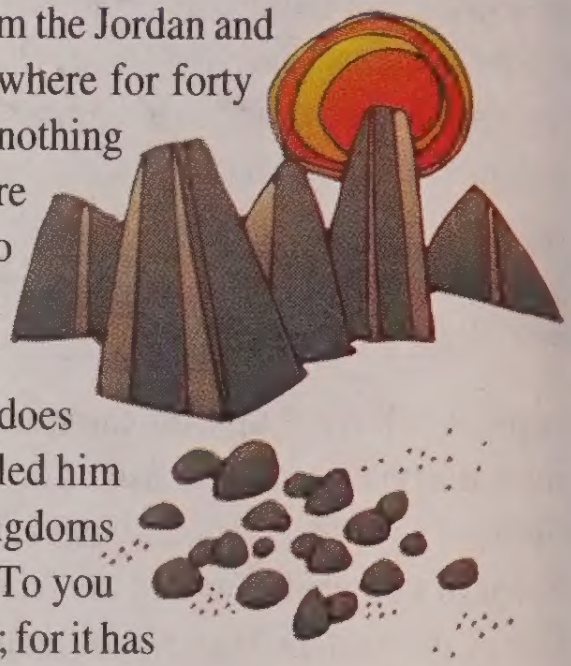
A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse [King David's father]; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. (NIV)

Naturally, the followers of Jesus saw their master described in the words of the prophets, as did Jesus himself. Today, try to jot down anything you recall from Jesus' life that compares to Isaiah's description. For example, verse 1 mentions the Branch from the family of King David; *Jesus was descended from David.* See what the other verses suggest to you.

Heavenly Father, I am grateful to be part of a large family, and a long tradition of those who looked forward to seeing your Chosen One, those who met him, and those who follow him. Let me do my part in passing on the story and nurturing the faith of your people in Christ, our Lord. Amen.

THE GREAT DECEIVER

In **Luke 4:1-13** we find Jesus being tempted by Satan.



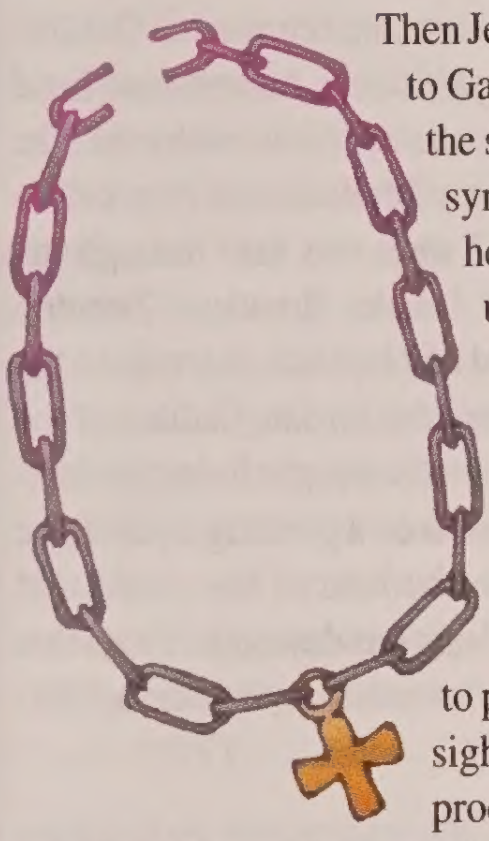
Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time. (NRSV)

Jesus was like us in every way except he had no sin. However, Jesus was tempted just as we are tempted. What comfort does this story give you in your Christian walk?

Heavenly Father, give me the strength to withstand temptation just as Jesus withstood temptation. Amen.

FULFILLMENT

During his life on earth, Jesus taught in the synagogues quite often. In **Luke 4:14-22** we find Jesus reading a passage from the prophet Isaiah which was fulfilled in Christ.



Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (NRSV)

What does the quotation from Isaiah mean? How did Christ fulfill it? Are you shocked that the people spoke well of him and were amazed instead of becoming upset at Jesus' comment as we see in other places?

Glory be to Jesus, Who in bitter pains Poured for me the life-blood From his sacred veins. Amen.

REPENT!

Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. In **Matthew 4:12-17** we find Christ fulfilling another prophecy of the prophet Isaiah.

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (NIV)

Why did Jesus wait until after John had been put into prison to begin his preaching? How had the people been living in darkness? In what ways are you still living in darkness? During this Lenten season, how is the "kingdom of God" both "now" and "not yet" for you?

Lord, shine your light upon those areas of my life which are still in darkness. Help me to always be truly repentant for all of my sins. In your name. Amen.

OH, TO HAVE SUCH FAITH

During his ministry on earth, Jesus healed many who were afflicted. **Matthew 8:5-13** *describes for us the healing of the centurion's servant.*

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one ,'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour. (NIV)

What does the centurion's comment show about his view of himself? His view of Christ? Why does Jesus say that the centurion has "great faith"?

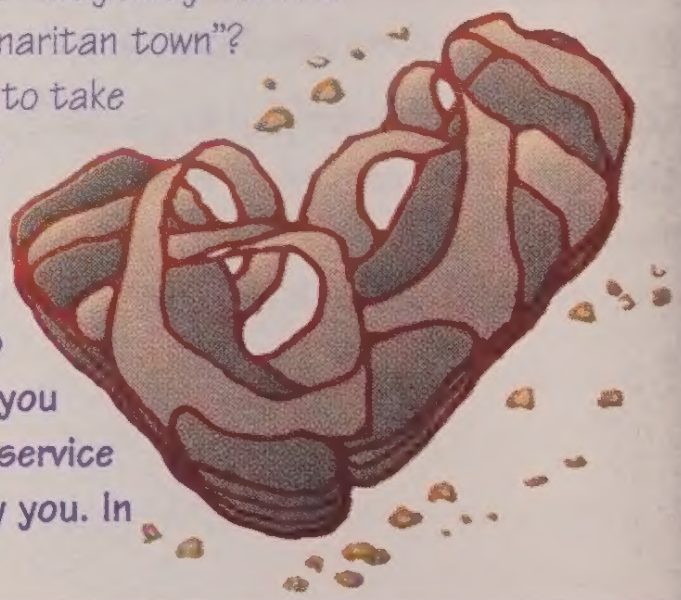
Lord, at times I doubt your promises. During these times, help me to have the faith of the centurion. Amen.

SENT FOR SERVICE

Jesus' life on earth was a life of service. In **Matthew 10:5-15** *we see Jesus sending his apostles into service.*

Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: Stay away from the Gentiles and don't go to any Samaritan town. Go only to the people of Israel, because they are like a flock of lost sheep. As you go, announce that the kingdom of heaven will soon be here. Heal the sick, raise the dead to life, heal people who have leprosy, and force out demons. You received without paying, now give without being paid. Don't take along any gold, silver, or copper coins. And don't carry a traveling bag or an extra shirt or sandals or a walking stick. Workers deserve their food. So when you go to a town or a village, find someone worthy enough to have you as their guest and stay with them until you leave. When you go to a home, give it your blessing of peace. If the home is deserving, let your blessing remain with them. But if the home is not deserving, take back your blessing of peace. If someone won't welcome you or listen to your message, leave their home or town. And shake the dust from your feet at them. I promise you that the day of judgment will be easier for the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. (CEV)

Why does Jesus tell the apostles to "stay away from the Gentiles and don't go to any Samaritan town"? Why does Jesus tell the apostles to take nothing with them except the clothes on their backs?

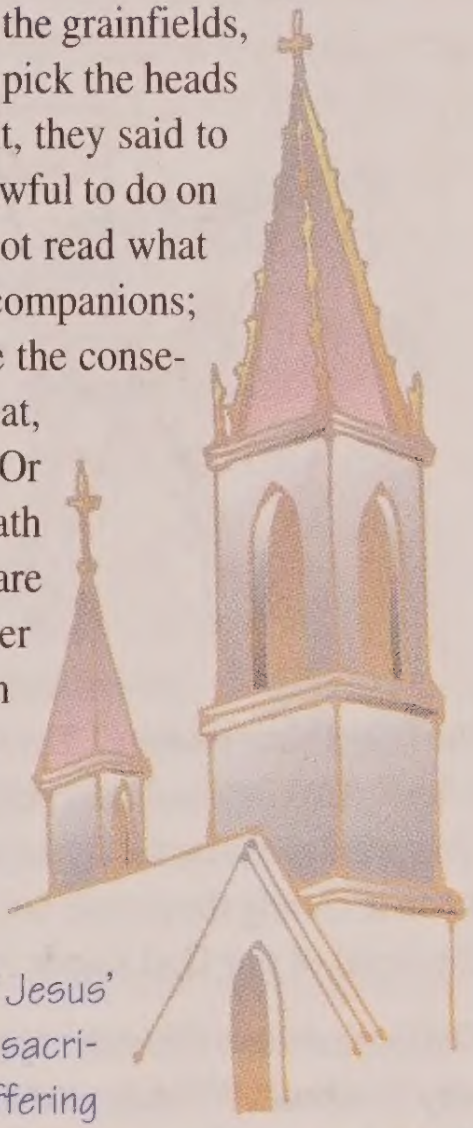


Dearest Jesus, during this time of Lent, help me to be of service to you. Help me to serve others as you have served me. Above all, let this service flow from a heart which is led by you. In your name. Amen.

KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY

During Jesus' earthly ministry, the Pharisees sought to entrap him with their questions. **Matthew 12:1-8** tells us of the time the Pharisees tried to entrap Jesus regarding the Sabbath laws.

At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (NASB)



How did the Pharisees neglect the meaning of Jesus' statement, "I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice"? When have you fallen into the trap of "offering sacrifices" but "neglecting compassion"? How might you work to reverse this?

On my heart imprint your image, Blessed Jesus, king of grace, That life's riches, cares, and pleasures Never may your work erase; Let the clear inscription be: Jesus, crucified for me, Is my life, my hope's foundation, And my glory and salvation! Amen.

THE WORD STANDS FOREVER

In Isaiah 39, we find the prophet Isaiah telling King Hezekiah that all he has will one day be carried off to Babylon. This message of woe is followed by a message of hope. **(Isaiah 40:1-8)**

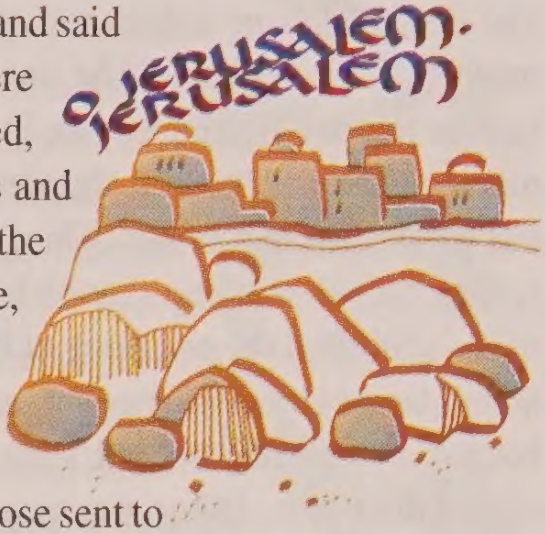
"Comfort, Yes, Comfort My people!" Says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD's hand Double for all her sins." The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the glower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (NKJV)

The Gospels use this passage in reference to John the Baptizer preparing the way for Christ. What does this imply about the identity of Christ? How do you "prepare the way" in your own life? What needs straightening and leveling in your life? How might this be accomplished?

Lord, during this season of Lent, help me to prepare the way for Christ into my life as well as the lives of others. Be with me as I straighten and level things in my own life which hinder my walk with you. In your name. Amen.

I WILL REACH MY GOAL

One of life's major assignments is to figure out who one is and what one's life is for. As one ages, the answer sometimes seems to slip away and leave one asking the question all over again. In the midst of his career, Jesus seems to have been aware of where his life was heading. No earthly ruler could deter him, nor would ignorance or hatred keep him from the mission of love and sacrifice he pursued for the sake of even those who rejected him. **(Luke 13:31-35)**



At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day —for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (NIV)

Jesus found insight into his life through the Old Testament Scriptures and through events in which his heavenly Father announced his Son's mission. How has Scripture helped you in your self-understanding? What events in your life seem to point you toward a goal? Do you think of your baptism? The Lord's Supper? Why?

Lord Jesus, I am not as sure as you were of my purpose in life. I accept what you have given to me, but I long to be more and to serve you better. Let your Holy Spirit lead me every day. Amen.

BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES AND EARS

Lent is a time to take a look at what we take for granted. Many children are not surprised that they have a meal on the table, although millions of children in America go hungry. Similarly, many churchgoing people are not amazed that they understand the words of Jesus or that they can receive his Supper, although—as Jesus' disciples realized—many who hear the Good News do not understand or recognize it as Good News for them. **(Matthew 13:10-17)**

The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.' In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." (NIV)

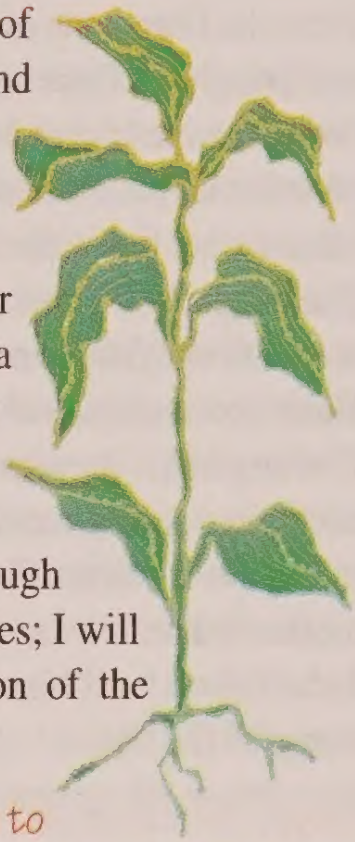
These are difficult words of Jesus. His parables—stories that called for listeners to decide for or against Jesus—left some people cold. Jesus says, however, that we hear and believe because God has blessed us with understanding and faith—surprising gifts of his grace!

Lord God, I treasure your word and give you thanks for letting me hear it and believe it. Give me and all your people the guidance of your Spirit that when we share our faith with others, they may be blessed with hearing and faith, as well. Amen.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE THIS

What is the kingdom of heaven, that is, the kingdom of God? During Lent, this season devoted to self-examination and repentance, we may think of the coming Day of Judgment that will usher in the kingdom. But the kingdom of heaven is also here and now, according to Jesus' parables. And in our present-day world, it is an influence far beyond what we might expect. **(Matthew 13:31-35)**

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." Jesus told the crowds all these thing in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world." (NRSV)



Let Jesus' description of the kingdom of God ask you to decide: Can I trust the power of God even when the evidence is small? Do I want to give my life to God's mission if there will be little to see or admire at first? When Jesus asked people to follow him, he asked them to say, "Yes, I can trust Jesus with my life and with my faith."

Lord Jesus, you call me to trust you in spite of what I see or feel. When my faith feels weak, let me trust you all the more. When I feel unworthy, let your Good News overcome my guilt. When I am frustrated, remind me that yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen.

WHERE DID HE GET THIS?

Jesus continues his short parables describing the kingdom of heaven, the reign of God. **(Matthew 13:44-57)**

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.... Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (NIV)

Do you think that you have discovered the great joy and value of the reign of God over your life, (as Jesus pictures it in this passage)? This Lent is an appropriate time to examine your life with this question.

My Lord and my God, open my eyes to see what I truly love and value. If my loves and pursuits have taken your place, forgive me. If my obligations push you into the background, turn me around. If I have given up, surprise me with the joy of discovering you again. Amen.

HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM

A death in the family causes a variety of feelings—sadness, relief that suffering is over, joy that the Lord has received his loved one, and later, perhaps, a new sense of purpose. When Jesus heard that his early comrade, John, was executed by Herod, he withdrew, then threw himself into his work. Faced with a problem in today's reading **(Matthew 14:13-21)**, he responded like a Moses feeding the nation in the desert.

After Jesus heard about John, he crossed Lake Galilee to go to some place where he could be alone. But the crowds found out and followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd. He felt sorry for them and healed everyone who was sick. That evening the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This place is like a desert, and it is already late. Let the crowds leave, so they can go to the villages and buy food." Jesus replied, "They don't have to leave. Why don't you give them something to eat?" But they said, "We have only five small loaves of bread and two fish." Jesus asked his disciples to bring the food to him, and he told the crowd to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and blessed the food. Then he broke the bread and handed it to his disciples, and they gave it to the people. After everyone had eaten all they wanted, Jesus' disciples picked up twelve large baskets of leftovers. There were about five thousand men who ate, not counting the women and children. (CEV)

Imagine how John's execution may have caused Jesus to reevaluate the future of his own ministry. Do you wait for a crisis to ask where you are going and what your relation is to your God? During these days of Lent, let Jesus' life story reflect on yours. How has Jesus' Good News shaped your life? How is he challenging you today?

Lord, I give you eternal thanks for following your saving mission for me and all people. Let my redeemed life serve you. Amen.

YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD

Opinion polls seem to have become the pulse of politics. When Jesus polled his disciples, he was not checking the political breezes but the progress of his students who, soon enough, would lead his Church and its outreach to the world. **(Matthew 16:13-21)**

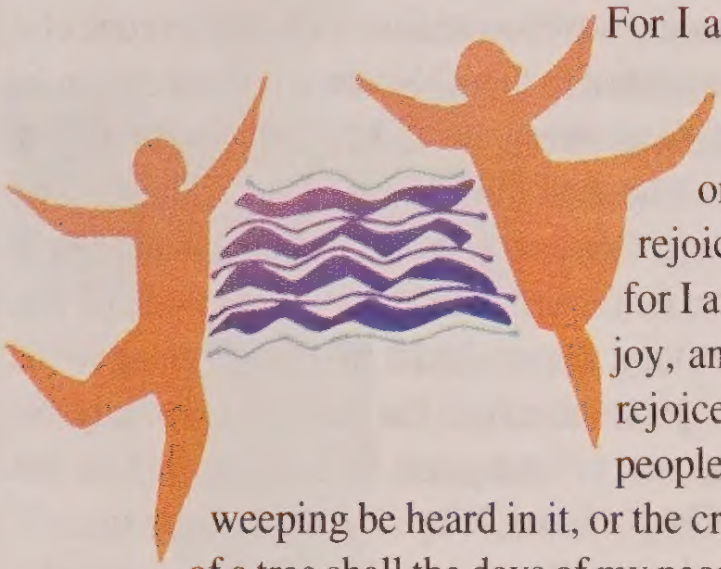
When Jesus and his disciples were near the town of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "What do people say about the Son of Man?" The disciples answered, "Some people say you are John the Baptist or maybe Elijah or Jeremiah or some other prophet." Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus told him: "Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! You didn't discover this on your own. It was shown to you by my Father in heaven. So I will call you Peter, which means 'a rock.' On this rock I will build my church, and death itself will not have any power over it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on earth. But he will not allow anything that you don't allow. Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. (CEV)

How did Peter do on this surprise exam? Peter gave no memorized answer but one from the heart. It showed the powerful work of God in him which would guide him for the rest of his life. "Son of Man" is an Old Testament title for the promised Messiah whom God would raise up to save his people. Peter's response is still a radical statement today. Why did Jesus say not to announce this? Perhaps because friends and enemies would be encouraged to expect that Jesus was a conquering Messiah, rather than the suffering servant he intended to be.

Heavenly Father, touch my heart so that I grow in faith, trusting your guidance for all the days you give me. Amen.

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Who doesn't sometimes wish for a better world? The book of Isaiah devotes over half its chapters to calling on the Jews to change their ways, to live in righteousness. But Isaiah relied only on God to turn them around. The last half of his book brings the promises of a gracious God who will send a Messiah with both a cross and a crown. **(Isaiah 65:17-25)**



For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.... for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. (NRSV)

Everyone has an idea of how things ought to be. What seems to be the Lord's idea here? Note that the Lord does not promise to fix our old world but to create anew. Did the Lord ever act on his promise, or are we still waiting? (Doesn't Jesus' resurrection give you a glimpse into this new world, that already exists and in which death is conquered?)

Holy God, we long for a better way for people to live together. Give us strength and patience to endure conflict and sorrow, while we look forward to your new heaven and earth. Amen.

A SECOND CHANCE

"Just give me one more chance" is a statement heard by every parent from their children after they have made a mistake. In **Luke 13:1-9** *"one more chance" is given to a fig tree.*

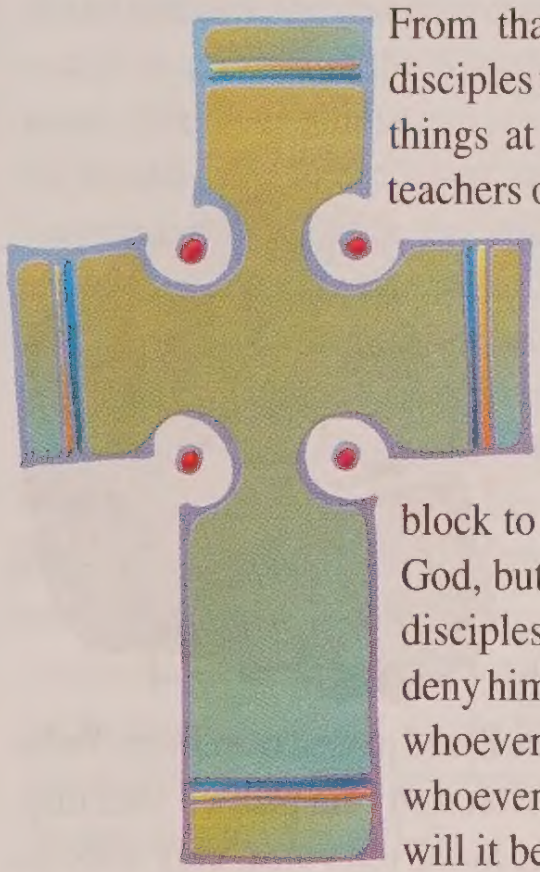
About this same time Jesus was told that Pilate had given orders for some people from Galilee to be killed while they were offering sacrifices. Jesus replied: Do you think that these people were worse sinners than everyone else in Galilee just because of what happened to them? Not at all! But you can be sure that if you don't turn back to God, every one of you will also be killed. What about those eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Do you think they were worse than everyone else in Jerusalem? Not at all! But you can be sure that if you don't turn back to God, every one of you will also die. Jesus then told this story: A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard. One day he went out to pick some figs, but he didn't find any. So he said to the gardener, "For three years I have come looking for figs on this tree, and I haven't found any yet. Chop it down! Why should it take up space?" The gardener answered, "Master, leave it for another year. I'll dig around it and put some manure on it to make it grow. Maybe it will have figs on it next year. If it doesn't, you can have it cut down." (CEV)

How is your life like the "fig tree"? If you had one year to turn your life around, what would you do? What "fruit" do you want to be producing in a year?

Lord, you have watered and cultivated me. Help me to produce fruit which is pleasing in your eyes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

TAKE UP THE CROSS

The life of a Christian is not always an easy one. In **Matthew 16:21-28** Jesus tells his disciples some of the hardships his followers can expect.



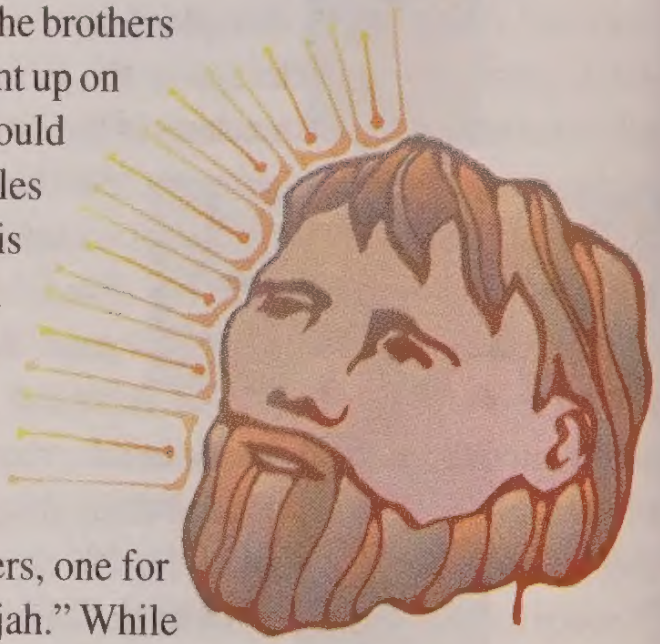
From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (NIV)

How does a Christian forfeit his life? How easy is it for you to "deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ"?

Heavenly Father, I know that the life of a Christian is not always an easy one. Help me in my struggles to lead a Christian life in an unchristian world. In your name. Amen.

TRANSFIGURATION

At certain times in the New Testament we find Jesus telling his disciples not to tell anyone what he had just done. In **Matthew 17:1-9** we find this request given to Peter, James and John.



Six days later Jesus took Peter and the brothers James and John with him. They went up on a very high mountain where they could be alone. There in front of the disciples Jesus was completely changed. His face was shining like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. All at once Moses and Elijah were there talking with Jesus. So Peter said to him, "Lord, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While Peter was still speaking, the shadow of a bright cloud passed over them. From the cloud a voice said, "This is my own dear Son, and I am pleased with him. Listen to what he says!" When the disciples heard the voice, they were so afraid that they fell flat on the ground. But Jesus came over and touched them. He said, "Get up and don't be afraid!" When they opened their eyes, they saw only Jesus. On their way down from the mountain, Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Son of Man had been raised from death. (CEV)

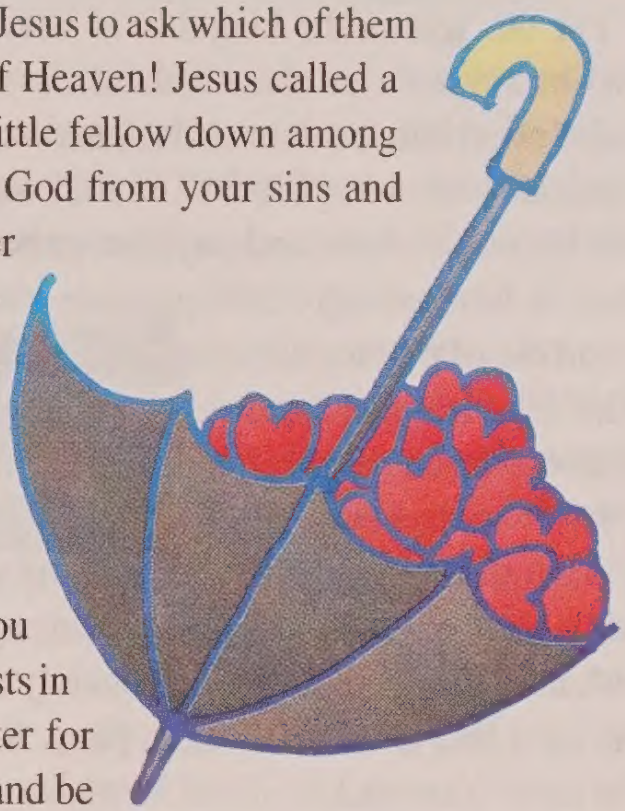
At what other time in Jesus' life do we hear a voice saying, "This is my own dear Son, and I am pleased with him"? What is the significance of these words? What do Moses and Elijah represent?

O Father, with the eternal Son And Holy Spirit ever one, We pray you, bring us by your grace To see your glory face to face. Amen.

A CHILD'S FAITH

In **Matthew 18:1-6** the disciples want to know who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus' answer is probably not the one they expected.

About that time the disciples came to Jesus to ask which of them would be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven! Jesus called a small child over to him and set the little fellow down among them, and said, "Unless you turn to God from your sins and become as little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of heaven. Therefore anyone who humbles himself as this little child, is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And any of you who welcomes a little child like this because you are mine, is welcoming me and caring for me. But if any of you causes one of these little ones who trusts in me to lose his faith, it would be better for you to have a rock tied to your neck and be thrown into the sea. (TLB)



What does Jesus mean when he says, "Unless you turn to God from your sins and become as little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of heaven"? Which childlike qualities do you need to recapture? How might this be achieved? Why is causing a child to lose his faith such a serious offense?

My faith looks trustingly To Christ of Calvary, My Savior true! Lord, hear me while I pray, Take all my guilt away, Strengthen in every way My love for you! Amen.

FORGIVE FROM THE HEART

Because of Christ's death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven. Likewise, we are to forgive others. **(Matthew 18:23-35)**

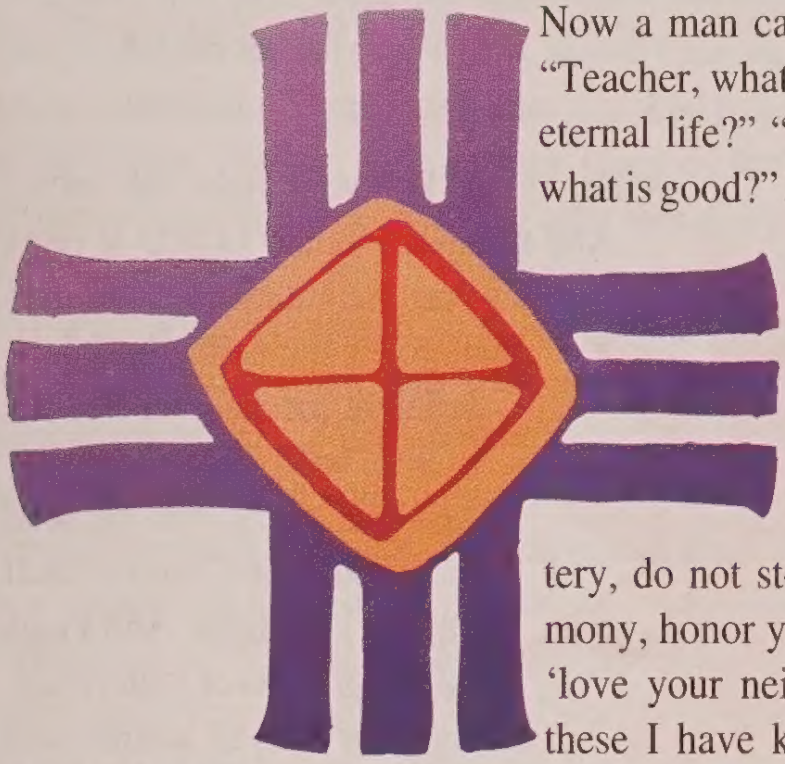
"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart." (NRSV)

What is the difference between just forgiving someone and forgiving them "from the heart"?

Pray that God would always give you the strength to forgive others "from the heart."

WHAT MUST I DO?

Many people would like to obtain eternal life. However, when they learn that this requires giving up some things, they sometimes pass. We find this happening in the story about the rich young man. **(Matthew 19:16-22)**



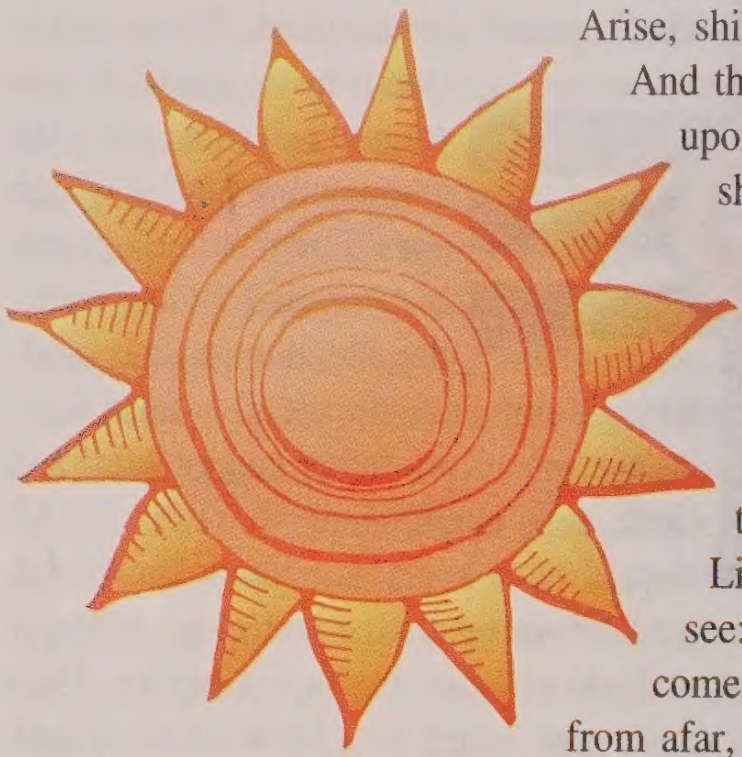
Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' " "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. (NIV)

Jesus hit this man where it hurt—in his wallet. If Jesus were to address you where it hurts, what would the topic be? Why is Jesus so tough on riches? What is the difference between how Jesus and the man viewed keeping the commandments?

Lord, help me to turn my sights away from the "riches" which would keep me from following you. Keep my eyes ever focused on your Son, Jesus Christ. In his name. Amen.

DARKNESS TO LIGHT

As a book Isaiah can be divided into two parts—chapters 1-39 and 40-66. Chapters 1-39 declare and describe God's judgment and condemnation upon an immoral and idolatrous people. Chapters 40-66 describe God's message of comfort and hope for the people. A message declaring that the Messiah, the Anointed One, is coming as both Savior and King. In **Isaiah 60:1-5** *we see this message of hope.*



Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather together, they come to you; Your sons shall come from afar, And your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, And your heart shall swell with joy; Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you. (NKJV)

During this season of Lent, what "darkness" are you experiencing? How does your faith in Christ help dispel these "darknesses"?

Lord, you sent your Light into the world to dispel the darkness over your people. I thank you for Christ, the Light, who turns my "darknesses" into lights. Amen.

A BROTHER LOST AND FOUND

Jesus was criticized by religious leaders for the direction of his ministry. Why, he might just as well have put up a sign saying: "Cheats, Creeps and Cons Welcome!" What a dangerous joke, they thought: religion for the undeserving! So Jesus told stories to explain God's concern for the lost. **(Luke 15:11-32)**

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.... When he came to his senses, he said 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father....' But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said ... 'Let's have a feast and celebrate....' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" (NIV)

When you read this familiar story, do you imagine yourself as one of the characters? Which one? Which of them knows the grace of God?

Lord Jesus, I thank you for your grace which saves me. Open my heart to accept in love those who need your grace as I do. Amen.

THE FINAL DAYS BEGIN

With today's Gospel lesson we begin to look at the final days of Jesus' ministry. In these days we will not see an unexpected reversal of Jesus' fortunes. Rather, throughout the Gospels popular reception (as in today's reading, **Matthew 21:1-11**) as well as his rejection were already there. Jesus intends to be the faithful Son. He knows what it will cost him. He will bear the burden of sin and serve his Father's plan to redeem the world through his righteousness.

As they approached Jerusalem … Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." (NIV)

This is the event which many churches commemorate through a procession with palms next week on Palm Sunday. Do you feel this day in Jesus' life was one of joy or sorrow? Can God's plan for us involve suffering with joy?

Lord God, as I think of your beloved Son riding to face suffering, I pray that you would bless my meditation, that I may love you more dearly for your love and praise you more clearly for your salvation. Amen.

DON'T YOU HEAR?

There was now no secret about Jesus' intentions. He disrupted activity in the temple, openly criticizing the profit-making. And he allowed bystanders to continue acknowledging him as the king from King David's family who "comes in the name of the Lord." **(Matthew 21:12-17)**

Jesus went into the temple and chased out everyone who was selling or buying. He turned over the tables of the money changers and the benches of the ones who were selling doves. He told them, "The Scriptures say, 'My house should be called a place of worship.' But you have turned it into a place where robbers hide." Blind and lame people came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. But the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses were angry when they saw his miracles and heard the children shouting praises to the Son of David. The men said to Jesus, "Don't you hear what those children are saying?" "Yes, I do!" Jesus answered. "Don't you know that the Scriptures say, 'Children and infants will sing praises'?" Then Jesus left the city and went out to the village of Bethany, where he spent the night. (CEV)

If Jesus came today in this same way, disrupting some church activity (that deserved criticism) to the accompaniment of cheers from street people, how would you feel? Shocked? Offended? As individual Christians, we may be shocked and offended by those who question our sincerity. Can you bear to listen to their questions as part of your own self-examination this Lent?

Lord Jesus, help me examine my life in the light of your life, so that where I fall short I may find grace and forgiveness. Where I am faithful, bless and strengthen me, that I may sing your praises. Amen.

WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT?

In confronting the religious leaders during the last days of his ministry, Jesus asked the most basic question: Is God doing this? It was a difficult question for them, for they had definite ideas about what God would and would not do. And they had fixed ideas about what they as priests and leaders were to be doing. Now, in these final confrontations, the leaders were hardening their position against Jesus to stop a movement that seemed out of control. **(Matthew 21:23-27)**

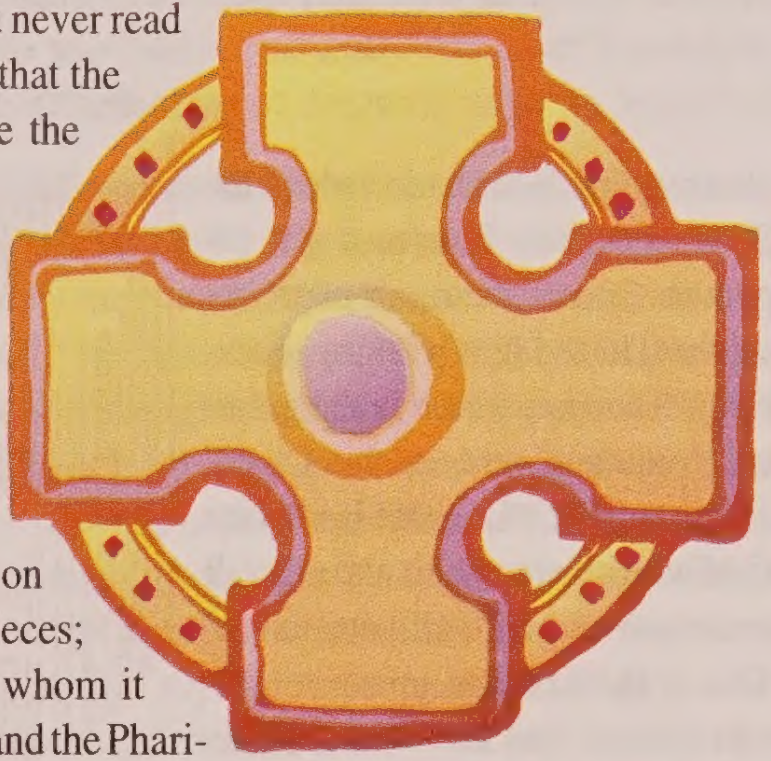
Jesus had gone into the temple and was teaching when the chief priests and the leaders of the people came up to him. They asked, "What right do you have to do these things? Who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered, "I have just one question to ask you. If you answer it, I will tell you where I got the right to do these things. Who gave John the right to baptize? Was it God in heaven or merely some human being?" They thought it over and said to each other, "We can't say that God gave John this right. Jesus will ask us why we didn't believe John. On the other hand, these people think that John was a prophet, and we are afraid of what they might do to us. That's why we can't say that it was merely some human who gave John the right to baptize." So they told Jesus "We don't know." Jesus said, "Then I won't tell you who gave me the right to do what I do." (CEV)

What had John the Baptizer called on the people to do? Why do you think the religious leaders could not bring themselves to respond to John's preaching? When your pastor preaches, perhaps about repentance, do you suppose your pastor is speaking to someone else?

Lord Jesus, open my heart by the power of your Spirit, so that when your call comes to me to turn from unrighteousness and to seek your pardon, I may accept your word of judgment and your word of grace. Amen.

THIS WAS THE LORD'S DOING

Jesus' confrontation with the authorities continues in our reading today. **(Matthew 21:42-46)** *Wielding parables like weapons, Jesus backs his opponents into a corner. They are not the heirs of the faith, they are faithless. They are not the protectors of the Law, they have stolen it for their own profit.*



Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet. (NRSV)

Jesus uses an architectural picture to describe himself as the foundation stone chosen by God—one that they could not recognize. Do you recognize the cornerstone of our faith? Thank God that you have been given the gift to see it!

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the foundation of my faith. Thank you for bringing me into your Church where I can know you and praise you. Amen.

THE FULFILLMENT OF LOVE

Everyone sings about love, especially romantic love. But love of God and fellow humans doesn't get nearly as much attention. The Pharisees took a last opportunity to duel with Jesus, throwing a theological question at him about the Law. Jesus' answer was not new or unusual to scholars, but their hostile behavior testified that they could not recognize love, either of God or of neighbor. If they could have, they would have seen that Jesus is himself the fulfillment of these greatest commandments. **(Matthew 22:34-40)**

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV)

The expert or scribe who questioned Jesus no doubt knew the Ten Commandments and the hundreds of other laws created to guide religious people. Lent reminds us that laws and perfect obedience, even if we can talk about them, are beyond our capabilities.

Lord Jesus, you walked among us as one who loved. In you we see perfect love and obedience toward your Father and perfect love towards us. Thank you for fulfilling what is beyond our reach, for suffering what we could not bear, and for bringing us into your kingdom. Amen.

TURN NOT FROM HIS GRIEF

The Old Testament in which Jesus steeped himself gave him words to express his mission—his hopes and his sufferings. The Lord of David and Isaiah and the other prophets had clearly promised rescue for a faithless Israel, in spite of their waywardness. But the rescue would come through the suffering of a chosen one who would remain faithful although rejected by those he came to rescue. Jesus realized that he was this servant, and he spoke these words in the depths of his suffering. **(Psalm 22)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?... But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. (NRSV)

Examine this psalm to find specific comparisons with the events of Jesus' suffering and death. All of us face suffering, at one time or another, on a large or small scale.

Lord, I bring before you those matters that worry me and burden my life ... (mention them now). O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Amen.

THE UNGRATEFUL TENANTS

While on earth, Jesus told many parables. In **Luke 20:9-16** *we find Jesus telling a parable concerning his death.*

And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out. And the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.' And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" (NASB)

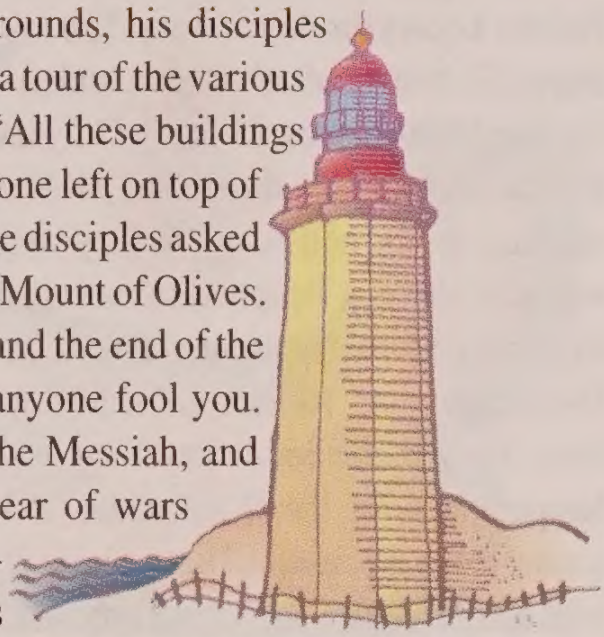
What do the owner of the vineyard, the vine-growers, the three slaves and the beloved son represent? What event does this passage foreshadow? Why do the chief priests, the teachers of the Law and the elders say, "May it never be!"?

Savior, when in dust to you Low we bow in homage due; When, repentant, to the skies Scarce we lift our weeping eyes; Oh, by all your pains and woe Suffered once for us below, Bending from your throne on high, Hear our penitential cry! Amen.

SPREAD THE GOSPEL

As children of God, we look forward to Christ's return from heaven. However, in **Matthew 24:1-14** we are told that the times preceding Christ's return will not be easy.

As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples came along and wanted to take him on a tour of the various Temple buildings. But he told them, "All these buildings will be knocked down, with not one stone left on top of another!" "When will this happen?" the disciples asked him later, as he sat on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. "What events will signal your return, and the end of the world?" Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone fool you. For many will come claiming to be the Messiah, and will lead many astray. When you hear of wars beginning, this does not signal my return; these must come, but the end is not yet. The nations and kingdoms of the earth will rise against each other and there will be famines and earthquakes in many places. But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come. Then you will be tortured and killed and hated all over the world because you are mine, and many of you shall fall back into sin and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and lead many astray. Sin will be rampant everywhere and will cool the love of many. But those enduring to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (TLB)

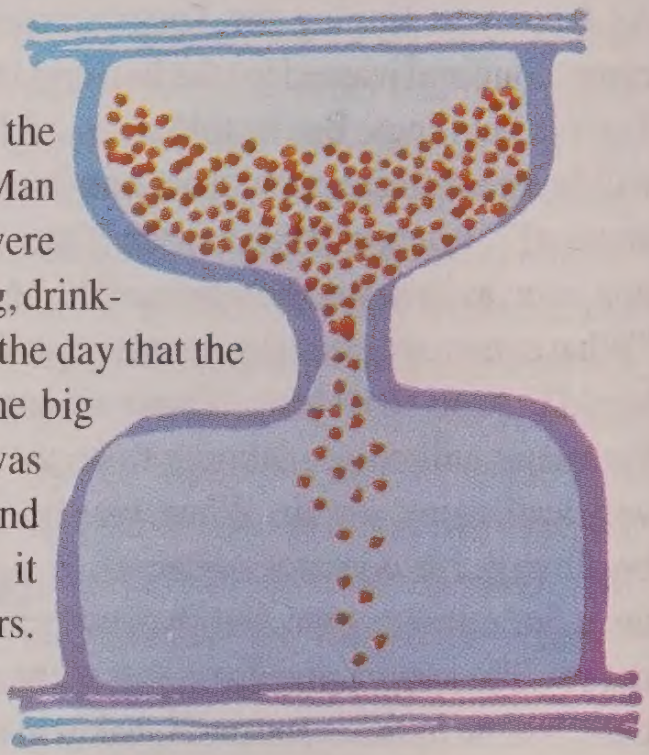


Jesus says that before the end times come the Gospel shall be preached in all the world. In what ways are you fulfilling this statement?

Heavenly Father, give me the strength to put my faith completely in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ALWAYS BE READY

Jesus wanted to prepare his followers for his second coming. In **Matthew 24:36-44** *Jesus tells his followers to be on guard and be ready for no one, except the Father, knows when he will return.*



No one knows the day or hour. The angels in heaven don't know, and the Son himself doesn't know. Only the Father knows. When the Son of Man appears, things will be just as they were when Noah lived. People were eating, drinking, and getting married right up to the day that the flood came and Noah went into the big boat. They didn't know anything was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man appears. Two men will be in the same field, but only one will be taken. The other will be left. Two women will be together grinding grain, but only one will be taken. The other will be left. So be on your guard! You don't know when your Lord will come. Homeowners never know when a thief is coming, and they are always on guard to keep one from breaking in. Always be ready! You don't know when the Son of Man will come. (CEV)

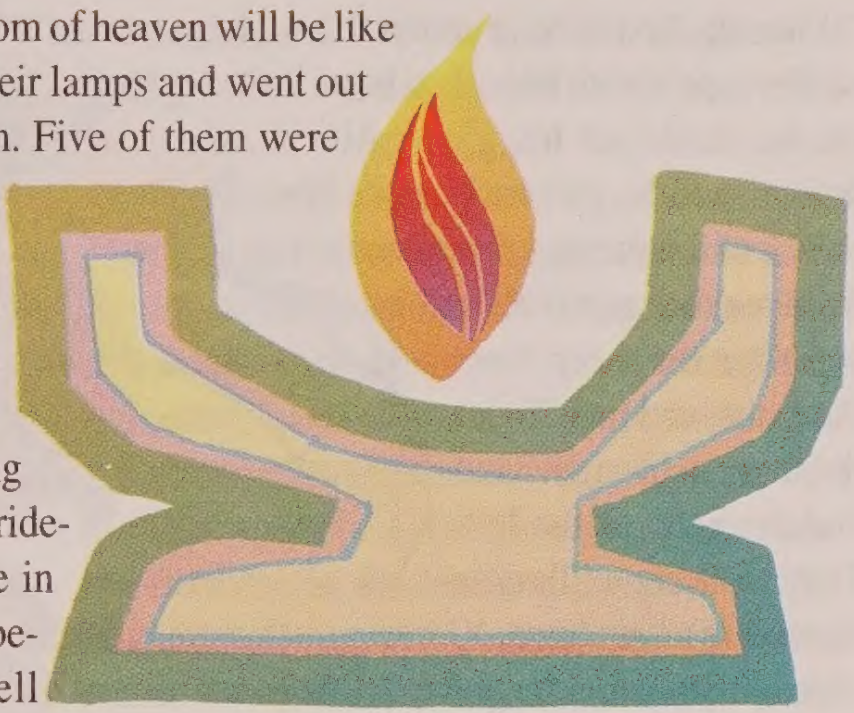
How is the flood like Christ's second coming? How are you preparing for Christ's return? How would you explain the end times and the second coming to an interested person?

Father, you and only you know the day and time of your Son's return. Help me to be truly prepared for his return. Let my eyes remain forever focused upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEEP WATCH

Jesus told his followers many times that his return would come suddenly. In **Matthew 25:1-13** he compares his return to a bridegroom.

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." (NIV)

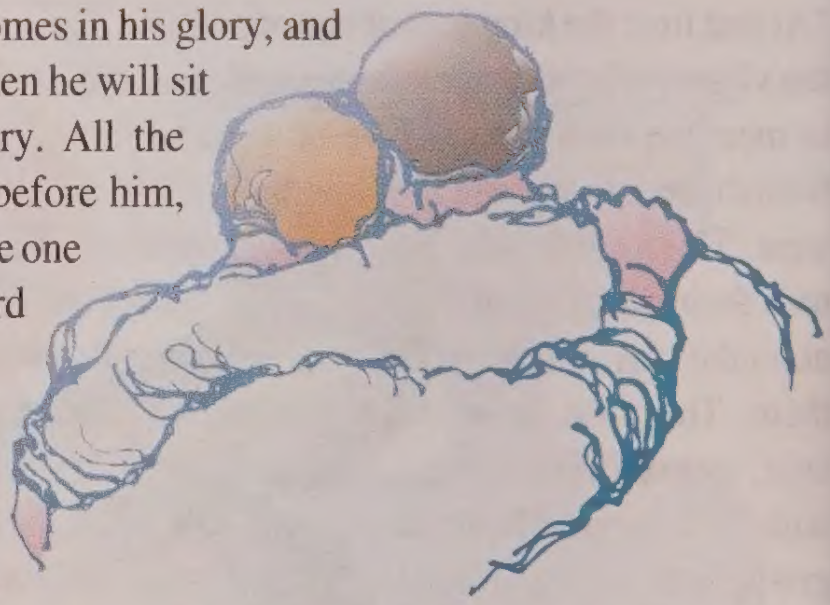


What lesson is Jesus trying to tell his hearers? You?

Lord, let me be every prepared for your return. Amen.

DO UNTO OTHERS

When was the last time you helped someone? In **Matthew 25:31-40** we are told that when we help someone it is as if we were helping Christ.



"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" (NRSV)

What bearing will this reading have upon your service to others? What role does faith play in our service to others? Can your faith and your works be separated? Why not?

Lord, help me to serve others as you have served me. Amen.

ANOINTED

In the Old Testament a new king was anointed with oil. In **Matthew 26:1-13** Christ, our King, is anointed before his death.

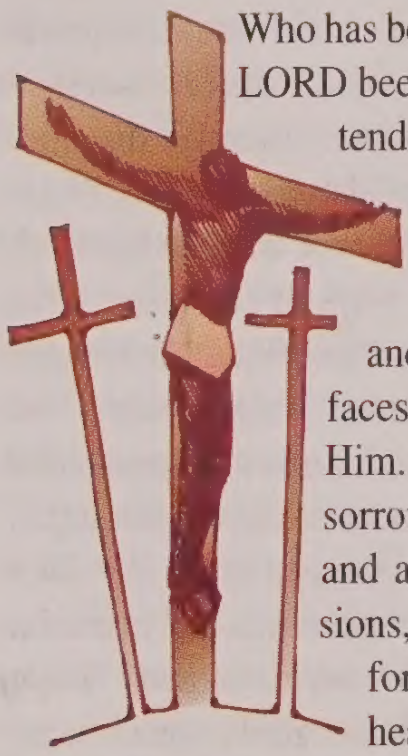
When Jesus had finished this talk with his disciples, he told them, "As you know, the Passover celebration begins in two days, and I shall be betrayed and crucified." At that very moment the chief priests and other Jewish officials were meeting at the residence of Caiaphas the High Priest, to discuss ways of capturing Jesus quietly, and killing him. "But not during the Passover celebration," they agreed, "for there would be a riot." Jesus now proceeded to Bethany, to the home of Simon the leper. While he was eating, a woman came in with a bottle of very expensive perfume, and poured it over his head. The disciples were indignant. "What a waste of good money," they said. "Why, she could have sold it for a fortune and given it to the poor." Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why are you criticizing her? For she has done a good thing to me. You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me. She has poured this perfume on me to prepare my body for burial. And she will always be remembered for this deed. The story of what she has done will be told throughout the whole world, wherever the Good News is preached." (TLB)

Why were the disciples indignant? What is Jesus trying to teach his disciples and us about priorities?

Christ, our anointed King, at Simon's house you were anointed with perfume by a woman, help me to be as lavish with my gifts to you. In your name. Amen.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Many of Isaiah's prophecies have two meanings. There is the meaning meant for the people in Isaiah's day, and the meaning in reference to Christ. In **Isaiah 53:1-7** we find one such prophesy.



Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. (NKJV)

What comfort do you find in this prophesy? How is this prophesy fulfilled in Christ? Compare this text with New Testament texts dealing with Christ's death.

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, See him dying on the tree! This is Christ, by man rejected; here, my soul, your Savior see. He's the long-expected prophet, David's son, yet David's Lord. Proofs I see sufficient of it: He's the true and faithful Word. Amen.

THIS MUST BE FULFILLED IN ME

Jews celebrated the Passover every year. Having returned to Jerusalem, Jesus made plans to observe it with his disciples. But this time the meal not only looks back to an ancient rescue from Egypt; Jesus looks ahead—focusing on his immanent suffering, death and victory. He is the final lamb to be sacrificed for the sake of the people. His is the blood of a new agreement between God and human beings. More, Jesus looks even further ahead, to a time when he will be celebrating this meal in the coming reign of God. **(Luke 22:13-22, 37)**

So they prepared the Passover. When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him."… "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." (NIV)

When you join in celebrating the Lord's Supper, what do you usually think or feel? Eagerness, as Jesus felt? Trust, as Jesus and his forebearers trusted God's rescue? A sense of purpose, as Jesus devoted himself to fulfilling his Father's plan? A sense of victory, as Jesus was confident of a greater life ahead?

Lord Jesus, each time I come to your Supper, and especially now at the start of this Holy Week, let me recall your faithful obedience, your saving sacrifice, and your life-giving hope. Amen.

HERE IS MY SERVANT

Today's reading is what is called the first "Servant Song" in the book of Isaiah. **(Isaiah 42)** It is familiar, especially the verses that are quoted in the New Testament. This song, describing the Lord's chosen servant, no doubt was etched in Jesus' mind. This mission was his. Today we look back and see in this song an explanation of what our Lord Jesus is and means for us.

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." This is what God the LORD says — he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness." (NIV)

As we look into Jesus' face, what sort of person do we see, according to Isaiah? One at a time, re-read the sentences of this passage. Which of these is especially meaningful to you at this time? There is an ancient prayer that says, "Lord, change the world, beginning with me." Lent calls us to ask ourselves, "How am I being changed to be more of a servant of the Lord?"

Lord God, I am grateful that your Son, my Lord, came to set things right with you, not in anger or hatred, but in gentleness and patience. Lord, let me learn through practice to be more like your Son, so that I may serve to open eyes, free captives and bring light to those in darkness. Amen.

YOU WILL BRING SALVATION

Isaiah 49 is the second of Isaiah's "Servant Songs." Here the Lord's servant is even more grand. Here the servant tells how he came to be and how the Lord valued him. Here we see that the salvation he brings will be for all people, as well as for Israel. Like a majestic choral anthem, this song illuminates the passion story with the meaning behind Jesus' grief and suffering.

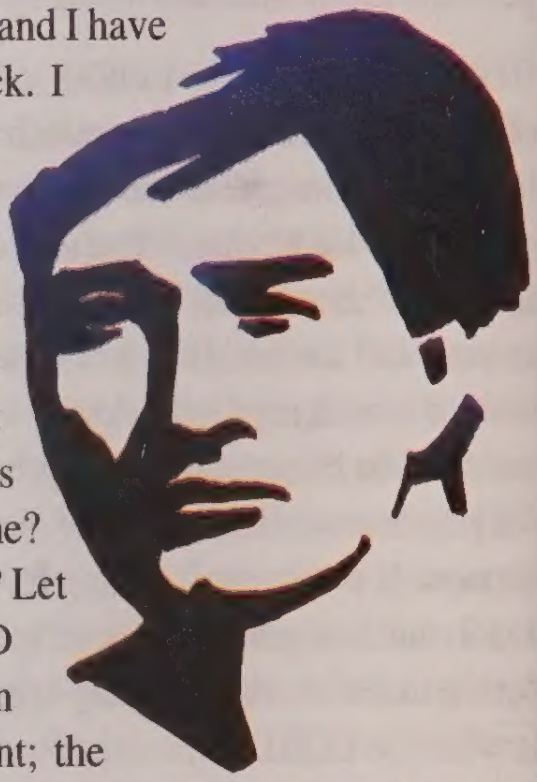
Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." And now the LORD says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength—he says: It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." This is what the LORD says—the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." (NIV)

Did this song echo through Jesus' thoughts during Holy Week—the frustration and the confidence? Let it run through your mind, for our faith lies here also. Only in faith can we see Jesus' death as a saving act of God. Only in faith can we believe that the powers of the world will bow before the Lord.

Lord God, I thank you for giving me the songs of your faithful people. Let me find in them insight into your saving plan for the world and insight into myself and my purpose in your world. Amen.

RELY ON YOUR GOD

Our reading **(Isaiah 50:5-10)** *from a third "Servant Song" in Isaiah is quite different from yesterday's. Here we are up close to the servant, seeing him abused, yet firm in his purpose and confident that he speaks for the Lord. See how these words reflect on the trial and abuse of our Lord.*



The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up. Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant, who walks in darkness and has no light, yet trusts in the name of the LORD and relies upon his God? (NIV)

What could sustain Jesus through his long interrogation, trial, abuse and crucifixion? The servant walks in darkness, guided only by trust in the Lord. Today think of the stresses or crises you may be facing; what in these words can sustain you?

Lord Jesus, as I prepare to recall the grief and suffering through which you brought me peace with God and freedom from fear, let me learn to walk confidently, although in darkness, relying on you alone. Amen.

DO AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU

At the Passover meal, Jesus may have embarrassed his disciples. It was a little thing. Someone was supposed to wash the dusty feet of those who came to dinner. None of the disciples moved to do it. It was a servant's job. Jesus, although full of thoughts and emotions about what he was about to endure, got up to get water and a towel, then knelt to wash their feet. **(John 13:1-5, 12-15)**

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.... After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord —and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (NRSV)

Someone once said that two symbols of Christianity are the cross and the towel—the cross meaning obedience to God, the towel meaning service to each other. Compare this scene with the other event at this meal (see last Sunday's reading). What connections do you see between the Lord's Supper and his foot washing? Many people wear a cross; where do you wear the towel?

Dearest Jesus, my Lord and my God, you stoop to wash me when I should be serving you. It is always this way, isn't it. Thank you for showing me what to do. Let your Spirit prompt me to do it. Amen.

IT IS FINISHED!

Perhaps you know the details of Jesus' trials and crucifixion well. They are recounted in each of the Gospels, for example John 18-19. Our reading today **(John 19:28-37)** *takes us to Jesus' last moments of consciousness. He is understandably thirsty. His last thoughts are of fulfilling his Father's plan. And John, writing down the record of what he saw, knows in faith that all that happened did indeed fulfill the promises of God.*

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."... When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced." (NRSV)

You may hear the entire record of Jesus' trial and death read in church during these days, or you may read it for yourself in any of the Gospels. The details are moving, upsetting. Jesus dies. It is just now—in the face of death—that we need the eyes of faith, to see beyond the broken body, to believe that God is faithful, to see the fulfillment of all God's promises.

Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, faithful Son of the heavenly Father, I cannot begin to understand your sacrifice for me. I can only give you thanks. Amen.

BURIED AND RAISED WITH HIM

Early Christians gathered on the Saturday before Easter for an evening vigil. Catechumens, who had been preparing for entry into the Church, were baptized, confirmed and ready to receive their first Lord's Supper. From a fire burning outside the dark church, candles were lit and all processed into the church singing an Easter hymn. This tradition of bringing together Easter and baptism is what Paul describes in his letter to the Christians in Rome. **(Romans 6:3-11)** Jesus was dead and buried for sin, but he was raised to new life by God the Father. Remarkable as this was, it happens to each of us who are baptized.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Do you know the date of your baptism? Some Christians celebrate the date as their birthday in Christ. Paul insists that we regard our baptism as an Easter, too, a death to sin and a resurrection to God. Happy Easter!

Holy Lord, victor over sin and death, lead me on my way. As you have raised me to a new life once in my baptism and freed from the power of sin, give me strength each day to renew my baptism, resist temptation and live my new life boldly. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!

The gospel records of Easter morning are straight forward testimonies of what Jesus' followers saw and heard. **(John 20:1-19)**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying.... She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" (NIV)

Christ Jesus, you are my Lord and my God. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

Turn Not From His Griefs Away—A Scriptural Journey Through Lent was compiled by King Schoenfeld and Charles Kieschnick with cover photo by Gene Plaisted, and is published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. © Copyright 1995. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. MW-1

with all my heart

FORTY WAYS TO PRAY LENT

by

Joyce Rupp

with all my heart

FORTY WAYS TO PRAY LENT

BY JOYCE RUPP

When I was young I was taught that "prayer is talking to God." Since then, I've learned that to pray is to develop a relationship with God. There are many ways to encourage, sustain, and enhance a relationship. We can pray in spoken words or silence, with our actions or in our quiet receptivity, by singing or with physical gestures. When we pray we bring our whole self to God. No part of our life is left out. Some of the suggestions in this booklet may not seem like "prayer," but if you look closely, each one is a source of being more intimately united with God.

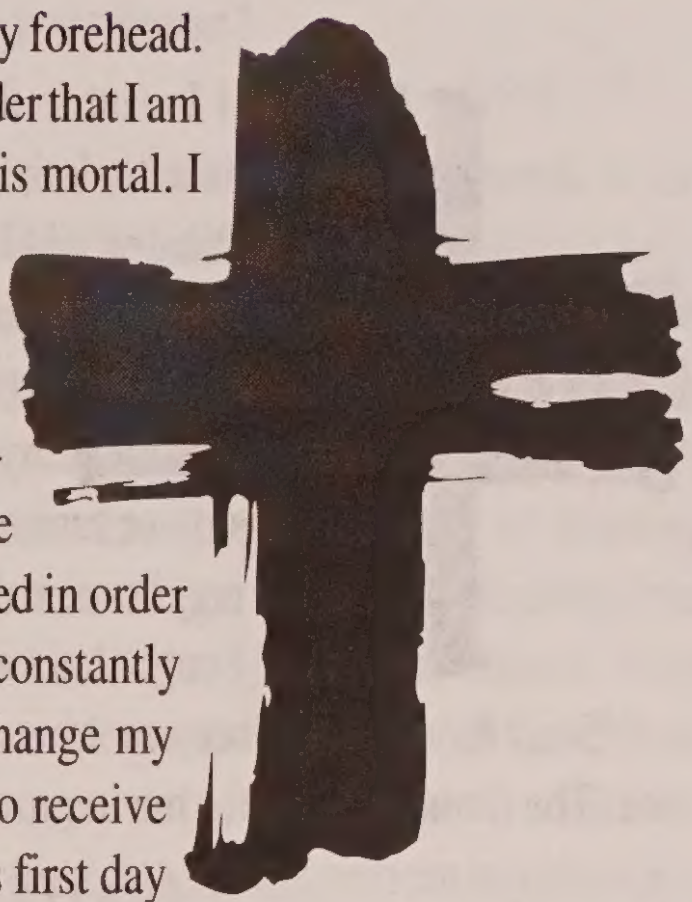
Prayer involves a place, posture, time, and intention. Choose your Lenten prayer place. Decide on a posture for each day (whether standing, sitting, kneeling, etc.). Sometimes I will give specific suggestions for this. Settle on the time you will pray each day. Finally, before each day's prayer, renew the intention of growing in your relationship with God.

Joyce Rupp is the author of ***Fresh Bread and Other Gifts of Spiritual Nourishment***, ***Praying Our Goodbyes***, and ***May I Have This Dance***. All are available from Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556, or at your local bookstore. ***With All My Heart***—*Forty Ways to Pray Lent* was written by Joyce Rupp with cover art by Sally Beck, and is published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. © Copyright 1995. All rights reserved. The poem *I Am Coming Forth* is from ***Fresh Bread and Other Gifts of Spiritual Nourishment*** by Joyce Rupp, © 1985 Ave Maria Press. Used with permission. Printed in the USA.

THE PRAYER OF RECEPTIVITY

Return to me with all your heart.

Joel 2:12



Today I receive ashes on my forehead. I receive the humble reminder that I am of the earth, that my body is mortal. I have ashes placed on my forehead—they are given to me and I receive them. This simple gesture of receiving is symbolic of the deeper receptivity that I need in order to return to God. God is constantly offering me the grace to change my ways—if only I am open to receive God's power to do so. This first day of Lent, I open my entire being to the presence of God. I long for the gifts of spiritual growth which will be offered to me.

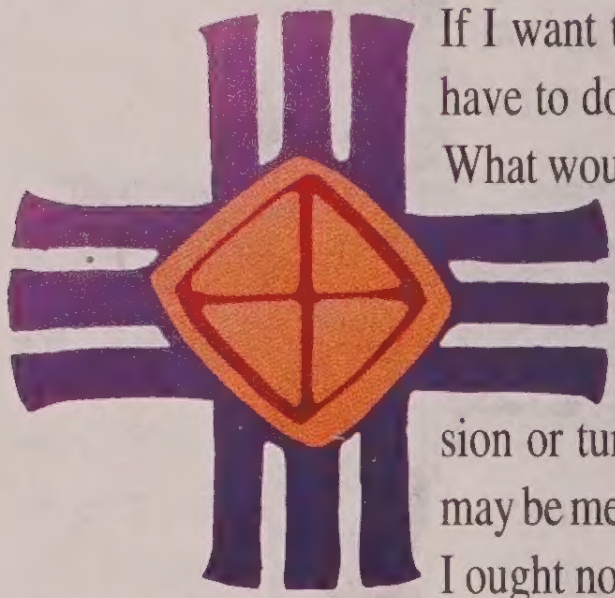
PRAYER

Quiet your mind and body. Open your hands, palms up, on your lap. Be intent upon being open and receptive to God. Let yourself be as open as possible to the power of God.

THE PRAYER OF CROSS-CARRYING

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Luke 9:23



If I want to discover my daily cross all I have to do is ask myself a few questions: What would I most like to get rid of in my life? With whom or what am I regularly irritated? Where does my pain, anxiety, stress, confusion or turmoil find its source? My cross may be mental, physical or emotional pain. I ought not simply to endure or fight what is difficult for me but, rather, see my cross as a source of transformation. The cross is a way for me to grow if I will accept it.

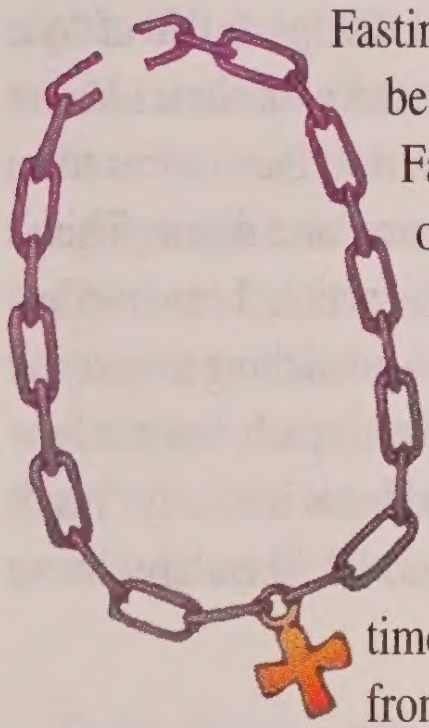
PRAYER

Today strive to accept the part of your life that feels like a cross. Close your eyes and see yourself carrying the weight of this cross on your shoulders. See Jesus with you, helping you. He lifts the weight and puts his arm around your shoulder. You know you are not alone in this cross-carrying of yours. Jesus is with you.

THE PRAYER OF FASTING

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice . . . to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?

Isaiah 58:6-7



Fasting is essential for spiritual growth. It can be a very helpful way to pray during Lent. Fasting means to choose to deprive myself of whatever keeps me from living the message of Jesus. So fasting is much more than just not eating or drinking certain things. It might be fasting from irritable thoughts about others, from watching television so I can have some time to pray or be with others who need me, from criticizing myself, or from buying something so that I can contribute financially to others. Fasting becomes a prayer whenever I intentionally let it draw me to change my ways so that I am more in tune with Gospel values.

PRAYER

Today resolve to fast from something so that you can live the Gospel message better.

THE PRAYER OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus said to him, "Follow me." And Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

Luke 5:27-28

What does it mean to be a disciple and to follow Jesus? How can this become a prayer? The description of a disciple is that of "one who listens." This listening to Jesus may start with some ideas or thoughts about the value of being like Jesus. It then moves to an interior movement of the heart, an attraction or a desire. This is followed with a decision of my will to take action. I can intellectualize forever and think that it would be a good thing to give my life over to the call of Jesus, to "follow" in his path, but until my heart responds and I truly do live this goodness it is only "head-talk." Discipleship can be a prayer each time I deliberately choose to live and love as Jesus did.

PRAYER

Today you can pray your discipleship by making deliberate decisions for good, choices that reflect the way that Jesus lived and loved. What can you do today that will reflect this goodness?

THE PRAYER OF THE DESERT

Jesus remained in the desert for forty days ....

Mark 1:13

The Spirit urged Jesus to head for the wilderness to pray about his life. He was sorely tempted there, but he was also ministered to by angels. The desert can be a desolate, bleak, lonely place—as can the desert places of our lives with their struggle, pain, isolation, and confusion. Here we can be tempted to lose our personal integrity or to hand over our truth or our values. Our desert times can be powerful times of prayer because we are often vulnerable and unable to cope by ourselves. Thomas Merton believed that it was in these desert times that we pray best because we have to throw ourselves into God's arms and rely totally on God to help us overcome our adversity.

PRAYER

Today choose a place in your life that feels like wilderness and desert. Go there in spirit. Visit it with your angel by your side for protection and guidance. Entrust your situation to the One who can empower you and fill you with strength so that you can overcome the obstacles and temptations in your life.

THE PRAYER OF LOVE

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

Matthew 25:40

When the Gulf War first began, I was conducting a retreat at a facility that had a lovely back yard with a circular walk amid a grove of pine trees. I was distraught, thinking of all the bombing and killing that was taking place. I went for a walk among the trees even though it was a wintry cold day. I walked and walked the circle. As I did so, the lines of a song returned to my heart: "Love is the only power, love is the only way, love, love, our love, give our love away." I began humming the words to that song. As I did so, I joined my heart to all the people in the world who were at war with one another. I took each country and held the people to my heart where I knew the Spirit of Jesus dwelt.

PRAYER

Pause to hear Jesus urging you to reach out and love those who need your kindness. Welcome God's love and hold it in your heart. Make a deliberate decision to be more aware today as you meet the love of Jesus in each person.

THE PRAYER OF DEEPENING RELATIONSHIP

Jesus said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Matthew 16:15

Marcus Borg, in the challenging and inspiring book entitled *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, describes Jesus as one whose relationship with the Spirit was the source of everything that he was. Jesus' whole life was rooted in this relationship. All that he said and did found its source in a bondedness with the Spirit. This insight helps to create a desire in me to know Jesus even more intimately. It also disturbs me because it shakes me out of my complacency. It leads me to reflect on my life, to question if I give enough time and energy to my relationship with Jesus. I find myself searching for how to continue to deepen and strengthen this connection. I want my life to find its inspiration and direction from this Source of Love and to have my life, too, rooted in the Spirit.

PRAYER

Write a letter to Jesus about your relationship with him.

THE PRAYER OF MERCY

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 51:1

Most of us can come up rather quickly with a list of our inadequacies and our sins. What is much more difficult, I think, is to be fully aware of the merciful compassion of God. This steadfast love is enduring, faithful, unending, solid, firm and unwavering. This is the stance which God takes toward us no matter what kind of failings and sinfulness fill our hearts. Too often we are tempted to say "yes, but ..." when we read or hear of God's great mercy. Today is the time to believe in the great tenderness of God.

PRAYER

Take either a kneeling or standing position, with bowed head. Reflect on what keeps you from being a man or woman of love. See where you've failed and where you need to grow. Hold your hands out and give all of this to God. Let God take it from you and place forgiveness and peace in your hands. Hold your hands to your heart and let God's merciful gifts find a home there.

THE PRAYER OF COURAGE

Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their (the Jews') destruction, that he might show it to Esther . . . and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.

Esther 4:8

Queen Esther was faced with many dangers for herself and her people. She is said to have turned to God in prayer and pleaded for courage to have the right words to persuade her enemies not to act. In a prayer attributed to her, Esther asked to be delivered from her fear. Such prayer holds a lesson for us all. In times of anxiety, we can easily tend to fret and stew, forgetting to turn to God who is our courage and our strength in times of trial. We allow our fears to take over our thoughts and emotions instead of opening ourselves to the One who is peace and guidance.

PRAYER

The direction of the north, with its cold, wintry, dark months, has long been considered a place of courage. Stand and face north quietly for five minutes. Let your heart be open and attentive to the Divine Indwelling. You are standing strong in the love of God who gives you courage.

THE PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

First be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:24

This may not be an easy or comfortable prayer today. It requires bringing to mind those from whom we are alienated or whom we have set apart from our lives. To be reconciled does not necessarily mean that one resumes a personal relationship with "the enemy," but it does ask for a change of heart. It is impossible to do so all by ourselves. If we bring God our desire to be reconciled, we are already moving toward peace of heart.

PRAYER

Sit with your hands upon your lap, palms up. Mentally place yourself in one palm and your enemy in the other palm. Hold both hands outward and ask God to bless each with love. Then, gently entwine the fingers of one hand with the other as a sign of your willingness to be reconciled.

THE PRAYER OF WALKING IN GOD'S WAYS

You are to walk in God's ways.

Deuteronomy 26:17

To walk is to make some deliberate movement in a particular direction. To walk in God's ways is to make a definite decision about wanting to walk through life with a heart like Jesus' and then to let God post the road signs for us along the way (e. g., "Patience this way," "Compassion over here."). We must be alert for these signs for they come in many forms, such as the teachings of Jesus, people's comments, the seasons of the earth, personal prayer, communal worship, or quiet intuitions and insights. I believe that almost anyone or anything can be a signpost for us on our spiritual path. What is significant is that we desire to walk in God's ways. We need to be deliberate in our choices for good, whether for ourselves or for others.

PRAYER

Go for a slow walk outdoors or walk slowly within your prayer room. Deliberately turn your mind, heart, and will to God. Repeat slowly: "I will walk in your ways, O God."

THE PRAYER OF CONTEMPLATION

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them.

Mark 9:2

What an astounding moment for these three disciples as they experienced the transfiguration of Jesus! They knew him, for a brief time, in a radically different way. Contemplation involves going apart, if not physically, at least mentally. It means being present to God as the three disciples were. The difficult part of this way of praying is that our lives are usually so rushed and busy that we rarely call a halt and just look intently at our life with God. When we do stop, our minds are still racing and we can easily get discouraged because "nothing happens." It takes time and practice to contemplate and we cannot force God's revelation. When we do see in a new way, it is pure gift.

PRAYER

Teresa of Avila had a way of praying in which she just sat and beheld Jesus in front of her. She saw Jesus looking upon her with intense love. Try this prayer today. See Jesus contemplate you with great love.

THE PRAYER OF GENEROSITY

Do not judge and you will not be judged ... Give and it will be given to you.

Luke 6:37-38

Jesus urged the disciples to be generous with their non-judgment, mercy, and compassion. He assured them that they would receive back what they had given. As I reflect on these words of Jesus, I ask myself: What is most essential for me to give generously today? My kindness? My mercy? My forgiveness? My understanding? All I have to do is to think about the various people I know, observing how I feel and what thoughts I have about each one. I quickly know how generous or stingy I am with my love.

PRAYER

Begin by acknowledging how generous God has been to you. Reflect upon the abundance of God's grace and goodness. Rest for a while in this generous Love. Let yourself absorb the wonders of God's graciousness toward you. Now look into your life and notice where you withhold your gifts of love. Who is most in need of the generosity of your heart? Who most often gets left out? Close your eyes and picture yourself being generous toward someone who needs your non-judgment and your kindness.

THE PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good. *Isaiah 1:16-17*

On the Lenten day last year when this Scripture passage was proclaimed, I had walked out into a winter wonderland on the way to church. Everything was covered with a fresh, deep, white snowfall. The earth was quiet with this unsullied blanket of beauty. In this silent space of morning loveliness, my mind turned to the words of Isaiah. I saw the wintered land as an image of my inner world when I repent of my wrongdoings and receive God's forgiveness. When I acknowledge with sorrow how I have deliberately gone against God's ways or have omitted doing good, it is like receiving a fresh, clean start. I repent of my wrongdoings, and God refreshes my soul with merciful forgiveness.

PRAYER

Kneel down in your place of prayer or else sit with bowed head. Acknowledge your wrongdoings to God. Then, listen to God speak these words to you: "Come now, let us set things right ... though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Rise from your prayer with a fresh, clean start for the day.

THE PRAYER OF SERVICE

Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant ... just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve ....

Matthew 20:26, 28

Jesus touched many lives in his short lifetime. He taught and healed and helped countless people in his ministry. Yet, it was not only *what* he did, it was *how* he did it. Jesus came among the people as a loving, caring individual. He looked with eyes of compassion. He served not out of pity or duty or what others might think but, rather, with a sense of loving relatedness.

PRAYER

The prayer of service begins in the heart and then extends to action. Today pray by meeting others with loving openness. Pray your service, not so much by taking on extra things to do for others but, rather, by fully entering into each personal encounter. Whether on the telephone, in the store, at the desk, or around the kitchen table, your presence with others can be a source of love. Say this prayer: "O Radiant Light, I bow to your presence in myself and in each one I meet today."

THE PRAYER OF TRUST

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord ... they shall be like a tree planted by water ... in the year of drought it shows no distress.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

I can read and pray many wonderful Scripture passages which speak of trust in God and yet, when difficult situations happen, I find myself again anxious and worried. I know that anxiety is a natural, human emotion, but worry accomplishes nothing except taking away my emotional energy. Jeremiah offers a powerful image of one who trusts: a tree that is not distressed even though it is a year of drought. Why? Because it is planted by a stream and its roots are in the waters. If my heart is rooted in the waters of God's love, I do not need to be anxious or distressed. I can trust that whatever happens in my life, God will always be there to supply what I need for spiritual growth.

PRAYER

Sit quietly with God. Look within and recall the power of God's presence. It is like water feeding the roots of a thirsty tree. Rest in this truth for a while. Then, look for any fear or anxiety you may have. Allow God's power to surround it and embrace it with loving kindness.

THE PRAYER OF SELF-ESTEEM

Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son!" But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and get his inheritance."

Matthew 21:37-38

We have all been rejected at various times in our lives. It may have been by someone ridiculing our beliefs or values, laughing at how we live our lives or at what we wear or how we look. It may be the deep wounding rejection of not being accepted within one's own family. If we can love ourselves well, we will not place so much importance on what others think of us or what they say about us. Good self-esteem is a must in life. We need to begin with our own self-acceptance—and not reject ourselves.

PRAYER

Write down all of your lovable qualities. Thank God for creating you as you are. Each time you look in the mirror today, pause to pray: "Thank you, God, for creating me as I am. I know that I am not perfect, but I also know that I am good and that I am lovable. Help me to not place so much emphasis on what others think and say about me."

THE PRAYER OF WELCOMING

And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Luke 15:2

Jesus surprised, challenged, and distressed many self-righteous persons by his marvelous way of welcoming and accepting rejected people. I used to label people who were different from myself as "weird," "strange," or "bizarre." I was not very welcoming to persons of different skin color, religion, or ways of living. All this changed for me when I began studying world religions. I was humbled and in awe of how people of many different races and creeds also longed for God and were much more faithful to their religious practices than I was to mine. I wondered how Jesus would welcome these very ones who are so often rejected by those who think they have "the best way" to God.

PRAYER

Stand by an open door in your home, perhaps in the living room where you would welcome your guests. As you stand there, pray to have the heart of welcome which Jesus had. Invite the unwanted and the unacceptable ones of the earth into your heart.

THE PRAYER OF THIRSTING FOR GOD

If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

John 4:10

The Samaritan woman at the well did not realize that the seeking and struggling within her was actually a deep longing for God. Jesus not only helped her to recognize this, but he also gave her a taste of the living water of himself as he tended to her with love. Someplace deep inside of us there is a great thirst for God, too. We may not feel it or have a conscious longing for God, but it is there. We may try to take care of this thirst by filling ourselves with food, drink, books, shopping, sex, or anything that we pursue relentlessly in the hope of being fully satisfied or happy. Yet, nothing can take the place of the living water of God for which our soul longs.

PRAYER

Sit with a glass of water and sip it slowly. As you sip the water, let each sip be a prayer of longing for the living water of God. During the day you may want to deprive your body of water or other liquids for a period of time in order to be reminded of your deeper thirst for God.

THE PRAYER OF CLEANSING

Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean.

2 Kings 5:10

The prophet Elisha told the leper Naaman to wash in the river seven times in order to be healed. Naaman thought this rather silly, but he did it and he was cured of his disease. Ritual washing or cleansing is a significant part of many religions. External washing is used to represent the inner cleansing that also needs to take place in the person seeking healing. Such things as the grime of selfishness, the dust of old hurts, the grit of mistrust, and the scum of jealousy all smear the windows of our soul. Each time we use water to cleanse ourselves it can be a prayer for healing and wholeness if we deliberately attune our minds and hearts to God. Like Naaman, we may need to pray this many times before we sense that we are changed. Inner healing can take a long time.

PRAYER

Deliberately and mindfully wash your face, your hands, your arms, and your feet—symbolic of your whole person. As you do this washing, pray to have your inner self also cleansed and purified: "Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me" (Psalm 51:1).

THE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

How often must I forgive?

Matthew 18:21

As Christians, we know that one essential aspect of our religion is that we must forgive others. Personally, I have never found this an easy task. I'd rather blame the other person, hold grudges, and stay angry than to begin the process of forgiveness. What I have learned, however, is that when I do not forgive, I am really punishing myself as well as the other person. I am filling my mind and heart with deadening emotions rather than with life-giving ones when I harbor non-forgiveness within me. No wonder Jesus so strongly urged us to forgive. To do this is to be kind both to others and to ourselves.

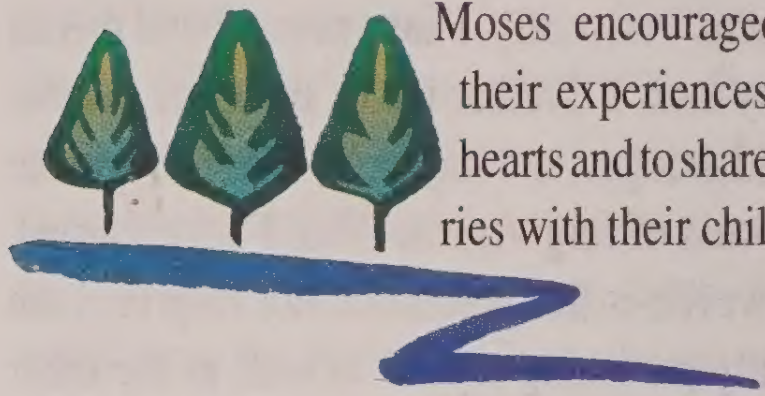
PRAYER

Recall the person(s) you need to forgive. Ask God to fill you with a willingness to forgive. Place your hand over your forehead as a sign of your desire to rid yourself of negative thoughts. Place your hand over your heart as a sign of your desire to let go of your negative emotions.

THE PRAYER OF REMEMBRANCE

Take care ... not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live.

Deuteronomy 4:9



Moses encouraged the people to keep their experiences of God close to their hearts and to share these treasured memories with their children. These memories would help them to not forget what God asked of them. Remembering our goals and values can be difficult to do in a world that is cluttered with busyness, greed and violence. Yet, deep within us, our soul knows that it belongs, first of all, to God. Today we pray to remember our rootedness in God and our strong connectedness to this Source of love and goodness.

PRAYER

Remember who taught you about God and how you developed your faith. Recall the values that you hold dear. Take three deliberate pauses during this day (morning, noontime, bedtime) to recall your rootedness in God. Ask God to keep you mindful of your deepest truths and values.

THE PRAYER OF CHOICE

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Luke 11:23

Every choice and decision we make in this life could be one that moves us toward or away from the teachings of Jesus. We do many things out of habit or unconsciously without a deliberate choice. In order to make good choices, we must develop a greater awareness of the decisions that are ours and notice whether or not the choices we make reflect our Christian values. These choices may be "little ones," such as deciding whether or not to honk our horn when we are angry at another driver or choosing whether or not to harbor mean thoughts about someone else when we are irritated. Even these little decisions affect our relationship with God.

PRAYER

Light a candle. Sit with it and ask God to be your Light, to help you be more aware of your choices for good throughout the day. In the evening, look back over the day and notice your actions. What kind of choices did you make? Were they for or against the message of Jesus?

THE PRAYER OF WHOLENESS

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Mark 12:30

It is amazing how one teeny, three-letter word can be so challenging! We are to love God with all of our being. This immediately causes me to look around inside myself and ask, "Is ALL of my heart in union with God?" Actually, I know that there are always places in my life that have yet to welcome God. This is one of the key challenges of spiritual growth: how to accept my human incompleteness and, at the same time, to yearn constantly for greater wholeness, ALL-ness, with God. It is unhealthy to get caught in perfectionism but equally unhealthy to pay little attention to the quality of my relationship with God. Always there needs to be a balance.

PRAYER

Write the word "all" on a piece of paper. Place it in your pocket or billfold, or attach it to a piece of your inner clothing. As you do so, pray this prayer: "God, I want to give you ALL of my love. I place this word close to my physical self today as a sign of my longing to be closely united with you."

THE PRAYER OF RE-TURNING

Come, let us return to the Lord ... let us strive to know the Lord.

Hosea 6:1,3

To re-turn means that one is going back to something familiar. In this case, it is a re-turning to God. This is a comforting thought for me. It suggests that I have already been with God and know this spiritual Home even though I lose my way every now and then. When I re-turn, I deliberately set my steps on the path that leads home to God. The path to God is always available to me. I need only turn and take my steps in that direction.

PRAYER

Stand and face any direction you wish. As you stand there, reflect upon your life and notice if there is anything that moves you off center or away from your spiritual path. Pray to let go of these things. Then, deliberately turn around and face another direction. Do this with the intention of re-turning to God. Continue to stand for awhile and to allow God to welcome you back on the path that leads Home.

THE PRAYER OF SEEING

Then he (the blind man) went and washed and came back able to see.

John 9:7

Our physical eyes are our windows to the world. When we look with our eyes, we bring the world back into us. We also have spiritual eyes which are our windows to God. Thomas Merton spoke of love coming out of God and gathering us back to God. He used the image of windows to describe this and said that we were all windows through which God shines. Thus, we look out through God's eyes of love and those around us look back into us and see God's love reflected there.

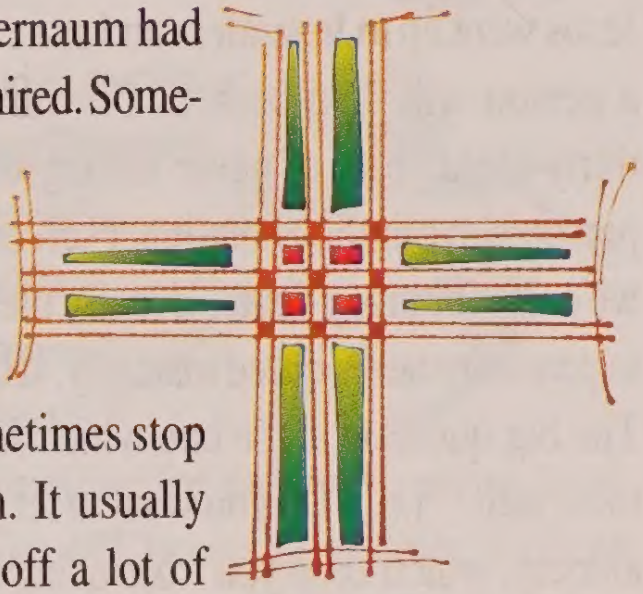
PRAYER

Sit quietly, close your physical eyes, and look spiritually within the windows of yourself. See God's love shining through you to the world. See God's love shining through others back to you. Enjoy the wonder of this indwelling God. Throughout the day, be aware of yourself and others as windows of God.

THE PRAYER OF BELIEVING

So he himself believed, along with his whole household.

John 4:53



The royal official from Capernaum had a strong faith which Jesus admired. Something deep inside of him knew that he could take Jesus at his word. He truly believed in Jesus. When the Creed is being recited, I sometimes stop saying the words and listen. It usually sounds like robots rattling off a lot of words with little or no thought or emotion. I often wonder what would happen if the celebrant stopped this recital and said to the people: "What do you believe?" Wouldn't it be a marvelous experience to hear the personal witness of those gathered as they told their own faith in Jesus and how it had come to happen?

PRAYER

Write your own Creed today. Begin with the words: "I believe…" Write whatever it is that you most deeply believe about God, about the basics of your religion, about life, about yourself.

THE PRAYER OF HEALING

Jesus said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

John 5:6

Jesus went up to Jerusalem and as he walked along he came across a person who had been ill for thirty-eight years. Imagine it—thirty-eight years of never feeling well. That's a long time! This person is symbolic of our inner selves and the wounds or hurts that we carry for many years. Usually these old memories and barriers to peace are never cured instantly. It takes a long time to be healed. The big question is the one which Jesus asked: "Do you WANT to be well?" i.e., "Do you want to let go of the inner hurts, turmoil, anxiety, which keep you from being peace-filled and free?" What is our response? Are we willing to let go?

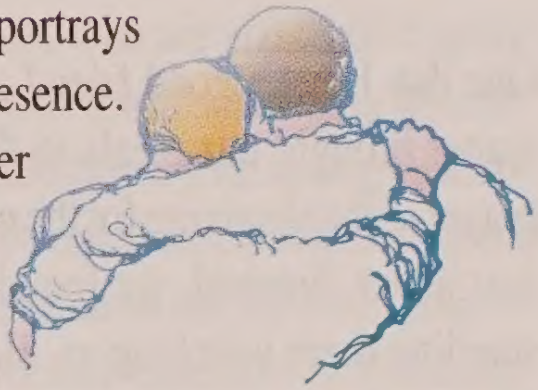
PRAYER

Pause to see Jesus with you, lovingly asking you the question: "Do you want to get well?" Talk with Jesus about any inner pain or hurt you carry within you. Ask to be healed. Then, place a band-aid on your body. Do this with the intention of receiving God's healing touch. Wear this all day as a reminder of your desire to be healed of old hurts.

THE PRAYER OF COMFORT

Can a mother forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb?

Isaiah 49:15



The forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah portrays God as a comforting and caring Presence. God's love is compared to the tender and secure bond between a mother and child, a mother who will never forget her child. In this passage, Isaiah also depicts God as providing for those who are in want. God promises that the people will be nurtured daily. Colleen Fulmer sings about this beautiful portrayal of God in her song "Rest In My Wings." The refrain encourages all who need the comfort of God: "Don't be afraid. I'm holding you close in the darkness." It is the love song of our God, who like a devoted mother, cradles us tenderly and loves us dearly.

PRAYER

Picture yourself resting in the arms of God. Take comfort in this magnanimous Presence. Let yourself be loved. Open your entire being to the nourishment, protection, and guidance which God promises to provide for you.

THE PRAYER OF TESTIMONY

These works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.

John 5:36

One day I met a good friend at a restaurant for lunch. After the waiter brought our meals to the table, we paused and offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the nourishment of food and friendship. Just as we finished, we found the waiter had returned and was standing there watching us. He said, "Oh, I don't mind waiting. It's wonderful to see people who still pray." Later, as we completed the meal, he came and said, "There's no charge. This one is on me. You gave me such hope by your prayer." Needless to say, my friend and I were quite amazed by the experience. It caused us both to recognize that whatever we say or do, wherever we are, we are giving testimony to our beliefs and values.

PRAYER

Think back over the past week. How did your life give witness or testimony to your following Jesus? Ask Jesus for courage and wisdom to give testimony to his teachings by your daily words and actions.

THE PRAYER OF DELIVERANCE

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all.

Psalm 34:19

How does God deliver and save those who are afflicted? I spoke with a friend who was recently diagnosed with a rare lung disease. Suddenly her world was turned upside-down with strong doses of medicine and an oxygen tank as a constant companion. She spoke of the frustrations of her physical limitations but she also spoke of her ability to be sustained by God. She had remembered a beautiful art-piece she had not seen for years in which Jesus embraced one who needed healing. This memory gave her great comfort. It was a kind of deliverance, not from her illness, but from the turmoil and distress which threatened to overpower her.

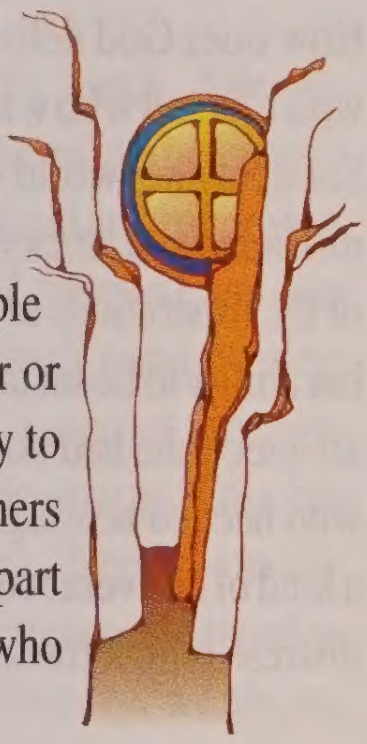
PRAYER

Bring your own broken-hearted pieces of life to God. Bring the broken-hearted pieces of the world to God. As you breathe in, pray: "Sustain us, O God." As you breathe out, pray: "Deliver us from turmoil." Repeat the breath prayer for five minutes.

THE PRAYER OF FACING EVIL

But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. And I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes ....

Jeremiah 11:19



Both Jeremiah and Jesus experienced the evil of those who schemed and plotted to destroy them. Their lives were often in danger because of evildoers. People today experience similar terrors. In numerous countries, people fear for their lives because of their skin color or religious or political beliefs. When people try to hurt others, when they try to get even, to get others to fail, or to be diminished, they are taking the part of an evildoer. They become like those who plotted against Jesus and Jeremiah.

PRAYER

Pick up the daily newspaper. Find an article about someone who is, or has been, in danger (e.g., victims of racial wars, sexual abuse, political struggles). Take this person, or these people, to the God of compassion and pray for them. Then, bring to God anyone whom you have plotted against or have wished to harm in any way.

THE PRAYER OF GROWTH

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

John 12:24

Many people want to grow spiritually. Very few want to accept the conditions for it, however. Growth usually includes some pain and letting go, like the seed falling into the dark soil. If we could squeeze inside the heart of a wheat seed, we would be astonished at the potential for growth that is there. If we could see into our own soul, we would also be amazed at our own capacity for growth. Jesus saw into these depths and urged his followers to let go, to fall into the unknown darkness, and to wait for fuller life to evolve. Let us trust in our potential and give ourselves to fuller growth.

PRAYER

Sit or stand by a plant, a tree, a garden, or anything green and growing. Notice the soil, the roots, the stem, etc. Touch the stem, trunk, or leaves. Be there in silence as a sign of your willingness to grow and develop your spiritual potential.

THE PRAYER OF COMPASSION

"Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you."

John 8:10-11

Compassion means "to stand with" those who suffer. I am always amazed at how well Jesus did this, even with those who were judged as the sinners of his society. Jesus had a keen sense of another's inner struggle and could see beyond the sinful behavior to the light shining in the soul. He opened his heart in welcome to those whom society condemned. Jesus stood up for the woman and protected her from the hypocritical mob. He also encouraged the woman to mend her ways and "sin no more." How comforting it must have been to this woman to have someone accept her as she was and to also believe in her enough to ask her to mend her ways!

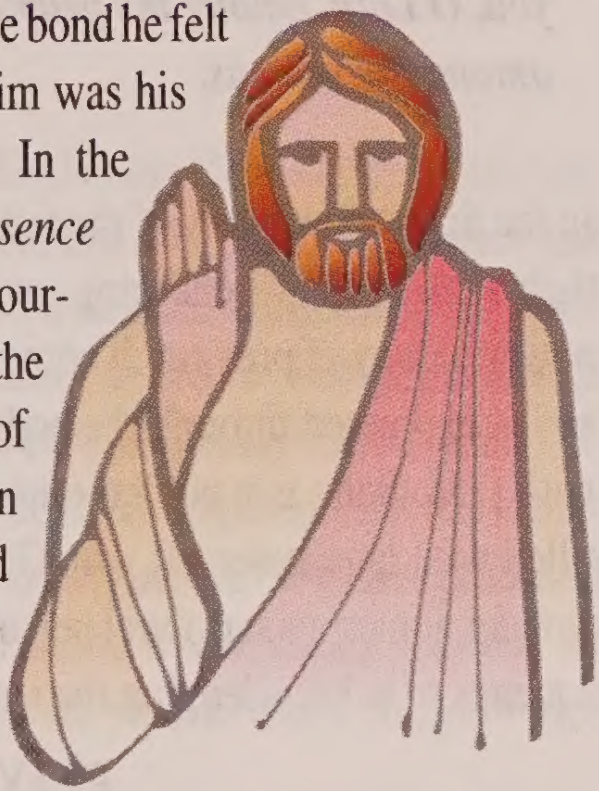
PRAYER

Think of someone you know whom you tend to judge or condemn. Mentally go and stand in compassion by the side of this person. Look within his or her heart and see the struggle that roams inside. Surround this person with love. Then, go to a group in society whom you judge negatively. Extend your loving presence to this group. Be there with the compassion of Jesus.

THE PRAYER OF PRESENCE

The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone.

John 8:29



Jesus knew he was not alone. The bond he felt with "the one" who had sent him was his greatest strength and support. In the classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence encourages his readers to develop the habit of recalling the nearness of God. He suggests that we begin by finding a definite time and place each day where we intentionally recall the loving presence of God. Once this becomes a habit for us, we then find another time and place and add it to the previous one. Eventually, we will have numerous moments in our day when we easily connect with God's nearness to us.

PRAYER

Pause quietly to recall that you are never alone. God is with you in this moment. Decide on one or two specific times or places where you will remember God's nearness today.

THE PRAYER OF SONG

I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.

Psalm 57:7-9

In the Scriptures, many of the faithful turned to music to express their faith in God's enduring love and presence. Song can be a powerful way of praying. It comes forth from the heart and mind and is expressed through the body. Song unites our entire being with God. Song is a natural outpouring of the soul when one is filled with amazement at who God is and what God can do. No wonder numerous scriptural persons raised their voices in song as a means of acknowledging the strength and power of God.

PRAYER

Hum one of your favorite songs, or play a song on a musical instrument, or listen to a song that speaks to you of God's magnificence. Let your song be a source of union with God. Let the melody be your way of praising the Creator who has given you life and who supports you in all that occurs for you.

THE PRAYER OF PROMISE MAKING

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said: "... Between you and me I will establish my covenant ..."

Genesis 17:1-2

One of the central qualities of God in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) is that of faithfulness. God makes promises and keeps them. Abraham experienced this and so did Jesus. And both of them, in their difficult moments, trusted in God's promise to provide for what was needed. We are also in a covenant with God, a two-way agreement made through our baptism. God has promised to be a faithful, loving presence. And we? We have promised to be loyal in our love for God and to live in such a way that all know we belong to God. Lent is the time to renew this promise.

PRAYER

Review and renew your promises to God. Confirm your promises with the following prayer: "God, promise keeper! Your faithful love inspires me. Help me to dust off my old promises to you so that I can live my faith with enthusiasm and integrity."

THE PRAYER OF PRAISE

Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

Jeremiah 20:13

When we are in the midst of terrible struggle and pain, it feels like we will never be delivered from the turmoil. But the day does come when we are gradually freed of the anguish and hurt. If we look back in faith, we will recognize the hand of God in our process of healing. We will see such things as people, insights, and little revelations and consolations which God brought into our lives in order to heal us. I wonder: Do the people who are healed praise and thank God as often and as intensely as they prayed to be released from their difficulties?

PRAYER

Make a litany of praise to God. Thank God for all of the situations which you have gone through and survived. Recall the special qualities of God which helped you in these difficult times. (Patience, guidance, strength...) Praise God for sharing these qualities with you.

THE PRAYER OF DWELLING

My dwelling shall be with them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 37:27

The Ark of the Covenant was reverenced in the Hebrew Scriptures as a sacred dwelling place of God's presence. Some scriptural translations use the word "sanctuary" rather than "dwelling." A sanctuary is a safe haven, a protection for those who seek shelter or safety. Each of us is a sanctuary or a dwelling place of the Divine. We carry God within us as the Israelites once carried the Ark of the Covenant. If we truly believed this, how would our lives change? How would we approach each person we met? What would happen to our relationships? Would we be safe havens for them?

PRAYER

Today I will see myself and others as a dwelling place of the Divine Presence. I will quietly bow inside of myself to God who dwells in each one I meet. I begin by bowing to God who dwells within my own spirit.

Palm/Passion Sunday ✠

Today our prayer is to listen intently to the story of Jesus' Passion. As we do so, let us enter into it with our entire being.

Monday of Holy Week ✠

THE PRAYER OF FAREWELL

Little children, I am with you only a little longer."

John 13:33

Jesus tried to prepare the disciples for his Passion and death, but they could not hear what he was saying. He was honest and open about the reality of his impending death, but it was more than they could comprehend. The disciples had too strong a grip on wanting things to stay as they were. It was not easy for Jesus to say farewell because of the deep love he had for the disciples, but he knew that death was a part of his journey home. It is difficult for most everyone to say the final farewell to loved ones. Yet, death is a part of life and must be accepted as the pathway to eternal union with God.

PRAYER

Be with Jesus today as you would be with someone who you know is dying. Experience the heartache Jesus felt in having to say good-bye to those he loved deeply.

THE PRAYER OF ANOINTING

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair.

John 12:3

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, expressed her love for Jesus by blessing his feet with expensive oil. This gesture must have moved Jesus deeply, coming as it did in the midst of his experience of rejection and misunderstanding. There is both comfort and strength in a blessing. The gesture of a blessing speaks of loving care and a desire to wish the blessed one well. The blessing also carries strength with it when it is given with love. Mary took a big risk in anointing Jesus' feet. We, too, take a risk when we reach out and bless someone with our words or gestures of kindness and encouragement. We do not know how our offer will be received. All we can do is extend it with gracious consideration of another.

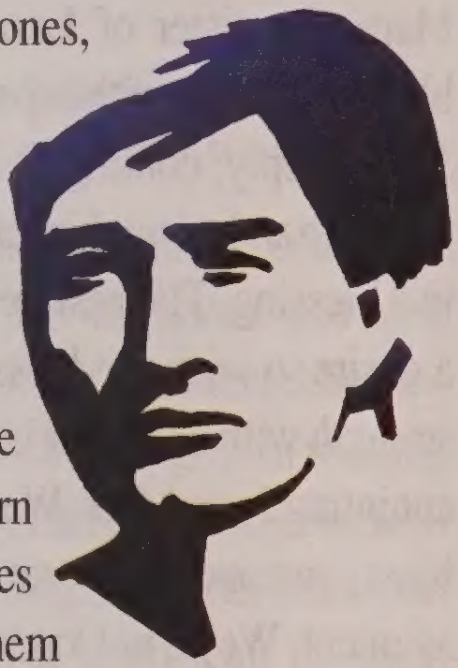
PRAYER

Take the risk as Mary did and bless someone with love today. This can be discreetly done by a smile or a kind word or more openly by a hug or a verbal blessing prayer. Begin by blessing those in your own home.

THE PRAYER OF ONE BETRAYED

And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

Matthew 26:21



Jesus sat at the table with his chosen ones, those he had nurtured with friendship and the truth of his teachings, and recognized that the brutal event of betrayal would soon take place. All of us have been betrayed in some way or another. From childhood on, we experience the pain of others who disappoint us, turn their backs on us, take our love, our hopes and dreams, or our gifts, and then toss them away with no regard. This is a good day to remember that Jesus has walked before us on the path of being betrayed.

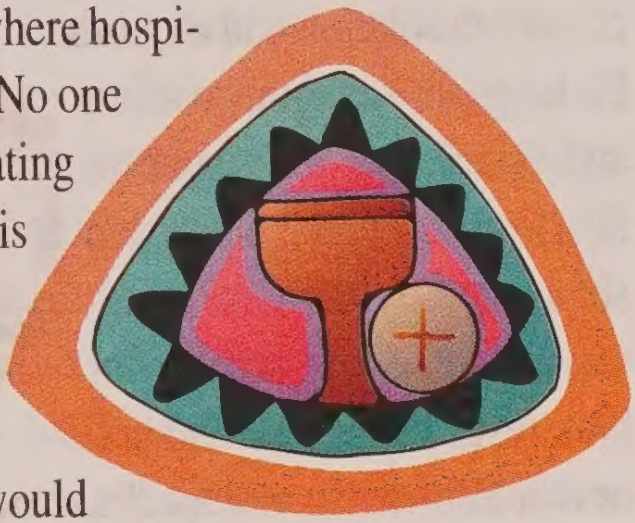
PRAYER

Quiet your body and mind. Sit with Jesus at the table. Notice the pain in his voice as he speaks of one of his own betraying him. Let the deep emotions of this moment sweep through your own heart. Speak to Jesus about this experience of betrayal in his life and in yours.

THE PRAYER OF EUCHARIST

The Lord Jesus ... took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you."

1 Corinthians 11:23-24



I grew up on a farm in Iowa where hospitality was basic to all of life. No one came to our house without eating before leaving for home. This gesture was received with plenty of "Oh's" and "Ah's" as the visitors ate my mother's delicious food. It would have been rude of them to simply devour the food without being aware of how tasty it was. I think of how rudely I sometimes approach the Eucharist, mindlessly and unaware of the Treasure of Life I am receiving. This day is one of remembrance and gratitude for the wonder of Life-giving Bread.

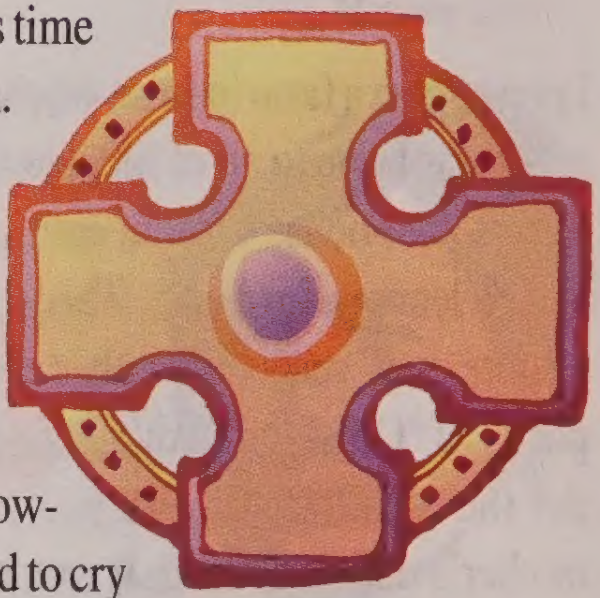
PRAYER

Every morsel of food and drop of liquid can be prayed today. Pause silently before each bite or each drink to be grateful. Pause in the same manner before receiving the gift of the Eucharist.

THE PRAYER OF DESOLATION

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Mark 15:34



Jesus hangs on the cross. It is his time of utter desolation and anguish. He longs for strength, comfort, and solace, yet feels none of this. Instead, he feels empty and abandoned by the One he always counted on to be there for him. Jesus let his pain and hollowness be known. He was not afraid to cry out his truest feelings. We can learn how to pray our own emptiness and pain from Jesus' desolate cry on the cross: be honest with our feelings; take them all to God even though all seems lost; then, give ourselves over to God in trust and surrender.

PRAYER

Sit with a cross held in your hands. Unite in love with Jesus in his abandonment and desolation. Bring to this any pain that is a part of your life. Surrender your heart to God and pray: "Into your hands, I commend myself and all who walk the journey of pain today."

THE PRAYER OF VIGILANCE

Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome ... came to the tomb.

Mark 16:1-2

The women went to the tomb, thinking that they would anoint the dead body of Jesus. Today we join these women and go to the tomb, knowing that our spiritual journey is not to anoint a dead body, but to stand in vigil and wait for an Easter moment. We go to the tomb remembering how Jesus waited to be raised from the dead and that the glorious moment of Easter followed this wait. At the tomb, we see the symbol of our own spirit: the parts of ourselves that have died and need to be raised to life. Like Jesus, we, too, must await new life to happen for us.

PRAYER

Sit in an enclosed room with the door shut, shades or curtains drawn, and no light. Be entombed for a while. (You might even want to lie down on the floor to get more of the feeling of being on the slab of the burial stone.) Do nothing. Try to experience waiting. Then, listen to God calling to whatever is dead in you. Let God call this part of you back to life.

I AM COMING FORTH!

I stand before this moment
with silent, rising sun
and page-full of Scripture
and I proclaim: *I am coming forth!*

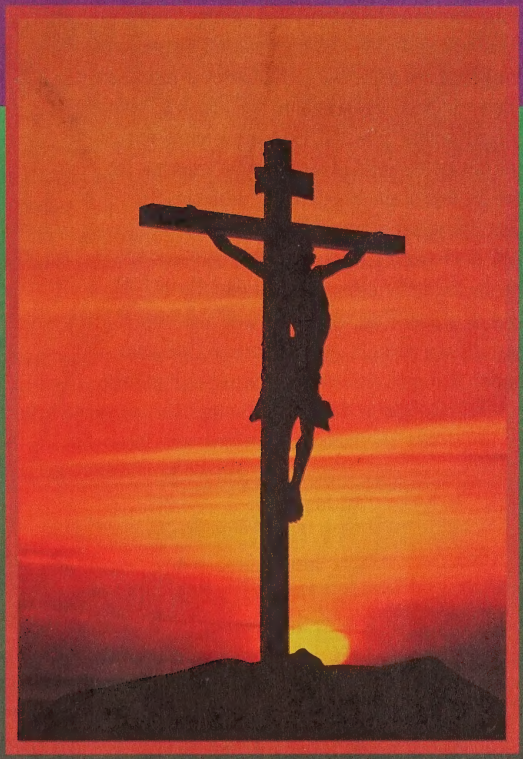
This is the season of my Savior,
the One whom God has raised from the dead.
This is the moment of resurrection
and I know it is the right time.

For I am coming forth,
coming forth from the tomb—
and just like my God risen,
I feel bonded with the world,
I feel all brokenness brought unto one.

I'm on my way to bless bread
with each of my dear friends;
I'm on my way to offer presence
to all those I meet on the road;
I'm on my way to bring resurrection
to all who need God's healing Life.

It is Easter
and I proclaim:
I've been raised from the dead!
I am coming forth from the tomb!

On To Jerusalem



Daily Meditations and Prayers for Lent

by Mitch Finley

On To Jerusalem

By Mitch Finley

The Gospel of Luke tells us that, "When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). This image of Jesus "resolutely determined"—as another translation has it—to journey toward his rendezvous with destiny is a fitting image for the season of Lent. During Lent, we make our own journey to Jerusalem with Jesus, determined to leave behind the "old self," equally determined to put on the "new self," to borrow terms from St. Paul. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2).

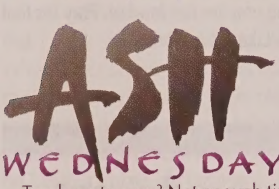
During Lent, we focus in a special way on Jesus' call to repent, to change our point of view and our way of living, by trying to respond more faithfully to God's self-gift of grace. The most basic way we "repent," of course, is by trying to grow in love of God and neighbor, and to that end, we embrace exercises that help us "die to the old self"—traditionally, we fast, we share what we have with those who have less, and we give extra time to prayer.

During his ministry in Galilee, Jesus cured many people and received much support from the people. There must have been a certain comfort in this situation, just as we tend to be satisfied with what is familiar. Still, Jesus was determined to make the journey to Jerusalem to fulfill the will of his Father. During Lent, Jesus beckons us to join him as he travels toward death and resurrection. So let us go to Jerusalem with Jesus.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Time To Remember

But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. —Matthew 6:6



"Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." Traditional Ash Wednesday words remind us of our need to repent and turn toward God. We need not look far to find ways we can become more God- and neighbor-centered, and one of the most basic means to this end is daily prayer.

Too busy to pray? Not enough time in the day? The television news anchor person will not remind us to pray. There will be no billboards on the way to work that trumpet, "Remember to make extra time for prayer during Lent." No radio jingles will warble a reminder to pray.

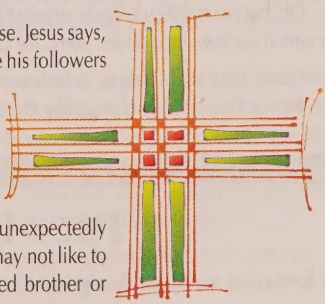
We need to do it ourselves, but we need to remember, also, that God's grace, our loving Father's gift of divine life, is always there to support and guide us. Why not ask the Holy Spirit to remind us to pray this Lent? Or ask a friend to ask if we remembered? Or put a note on the bathroom mirror: "Remember to pray a little longer today!"

Lord Jesus, prayer and service were central to your earthly life. You made time to be alone to pray and to heal and teach. Help me, in my busy life, to make time to pray and serve others.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Faith Active In Love

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. —Luke 9:23



Here's where the rubber hits the road, faith-wise. Jesus says, right there in Luke's Gospel, that if we want to be his followers we need to deny ourselves and pick up our cross each and every day and go where he goes. Husband, bring your wife flowers or write her a poem more than once during Lent. That's a cross for many men that will lead to a marital resurrection. Wife, ask your husband out for a "date" unexpectedly more than once during Lent. Single adult, you may not like to do it, but volunteer to baby-sit for your married brother or

sister more than once during Lent. And remember to do it cheerfully.

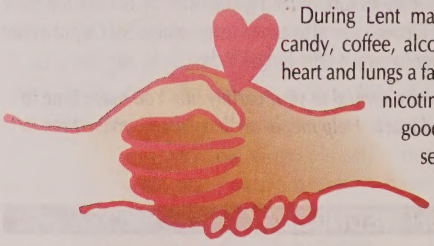
Talk like this does not come as the best of news if we believe that life should be trouble free, devoid of hardship and sacrifice. Something in us wants faith to be not a daily cross but just the opposite, a daily spiritual aspirin, a security blanket, protection from anything that may harm us. On the contrary, to say "yes" to the grace God freely gives us is to say "yes" to daily self-denial in order to love others better, and to do this with a certain joy. Today, make a plan to show a caring love for someone you are not fond of. Pray for that person, then give him or her a smile and a kind word. Like Jesus would.

Spirit of God, help me take up my cross this Lent.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Build Up "Other-Centeredness"

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice. . .to let the oppressed go free. . .? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house. . .? —Isaiah 58:6-7



During Lent maybe we avoid certain goodies—candy, coffee, alcohol. Maybe we decide to do our heart and lungs a favor and try to free ourselves from a nicotine addiction. All these things are good. But they are no end in themselves. We fast and abstain during Lent for one purpose only, to grow in love, love for God and love for those we live and work with.

If we give up some delectable for Lent, the idea is to weaken self-centeredness and build up the spirit of other-centeredness. Perhaps I have trouble being sensitive to the feelings of my spouse or children. Perhaps I am reluctant to take into account the personal lives of my fellow workers or employees. Lent is precisely the time to change, to reform my life.

Oh, but this is difficult, this business of self-denial. We do so crave to coddle, cuddle and comfort our own little selves. Sorry, the Gospel says, that's not the way of Jesus the Christ.

Come, Lord Jesus, help us to be less self-centered, more other-centered. Help us to let our lives be truly changed by the Gospel.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Face Up To Sin

I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance. —Luke 5:32

The first four days of Lent are like the runway an airplane uses to take off. During these four days, we try to get a running start for the long haul of Lent. Now is when we accept the fact that most of the time there are things about our lives that are not what they should be. There are things about ourselves that are out of whack, that need changing. In traditional language, we face up to the fact that we are sinners.

When I slice a grapefruit in half for myself and my spouse, perhaps I compare the halves, calculate which is the biggest, the juiciest, and sometimes I give myself the half that I think is best. That's a symptom of plain old self-centeredness. When I must say no to my child but can't seem to do it without raising my voice, that's a plain old refusal to exercise self-control. When someone asks for my help but I make excuses so I can sit at home and zone out on TV, that's plain old laziness.

Lent is time to look our sinfulness straight in the face and say, "I'm going to do something about this, and with the grace of God I will."

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

A Call To Repent

He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. —Mark 1:13

Lent is a season of wild beasts and angels. The wild beasts are the ways we continue to live that do not bring the Spirit of Jesus into our world. The angels are the ways in which we do manifest the goodness and love of God in the world. We are called to be converted in two ways. First, we face up to the fact of our own sinfulness. Yes, we do behave in selfish, self-centered ways. Yes, we deliberately hurt other people. Yes, we neglect prayer and, yes, we fail to give time and attention to those we say we love. Repent, the Jesus of Lent calls out.

Second, we face up to the fact that sometimes we deny or downplay the gifts God gave us. We can't take a compliment to save our souls. OK, we say during Lent, I will admit that I'm good at this or that. There are ways in which I am, in fact, a good parent, a good spouse, a good friend, or a good worker. Quite often I do it right. Sometimes when the Spirit moves me, I do respond faithfully. I'm not entirely sinful, in large part I'm also hugely blessed, and I will stop denying that, for this, too, is sinful. Repent, the Jesus of Lent calls out.

Lord Jesus, Lord of Lent, open our eyes to the ways we are sinners, and open our eyes, too, to the ways we are saints, all to the glory of your name.

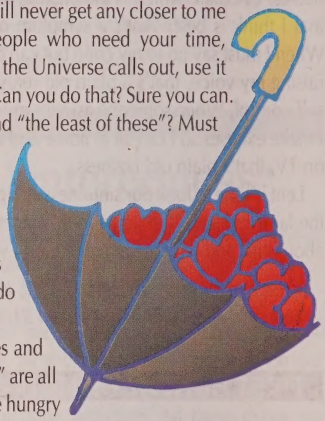
MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Respond To "The Least"

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. —Matthew 25:40

Listen. Here, Jesus says, the truth is that you will never get any closer to me in this knockabout world than you get to people who need your time, attention, and gifts. Use Lent for this, the King of the Universe calls out, use it to inch just a little closer to "the least of these." Can you do that? Sure you can.

Must I make a journey to a distant place to find "the least of these"? Must I take special training, buy a ticket, pack my bags, leave behind all I cherish most to find "the least of these"? Must I undergo culture shock? Don't be foolish, the King of the Universe responds, chuckling. Some of my servants do this and they are blessed. But most of my servants do not and they are blessed, too.



Lent is a time to shake the scales from our eyes and see what's what. What's what? "The least of these" are all around us, that's what. Our children, and they are hungry for more than food. Our neighbors, and they are thirsty for more than water. Our co-workers, and they lack more than clothing. "The least of these" crave a kind word, tolerance, patience, a helping hand, affirmation, practical everyday kinds of love. That's what.

God our loving Father, help us to recognize in the people we live and work with daily "the least of these who are members of [your] family," and help us to care for them lovingly and well.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

A Perfect Time To Forgive

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. . . —Matthew 6:14

"Trespass." An intriguing word, that. One of its meanings is "to sin against another." We tend to think of "sin" as an offense against God. But we can sin against people, as well.

Lent is a perfect time to do something about forgiveness. Yes, we need God's forgiveness for our sins. But we need to forgive others for how they "trespassed" or sinned against us. So important is this that Jesus actually says that if we forgive others our heavenly Father will forgive us. As far as Jesus is concerned, the two go together.

How easy it is to bear a grudge! Someone sins against us and it's like we embrace our anger and it gives birth to a grudge, heavy as lead, that we welcome into our heart and take a certain perverse comfort from. "I'll never forgive you for that." "I'll never speak to him/her again as long as I live." We've all heard stories of brothers or sisters who had a "falling out" and died never having spoken to one another again. Influenced by self-help pop psychology, how many adults bear an angry grudge against their parents "for all the bad things they did to me when I was growing up"?

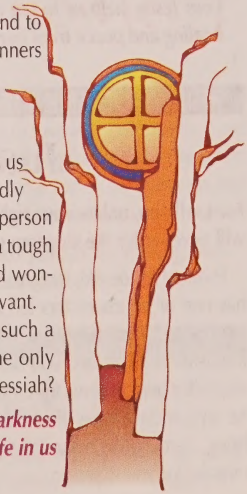
The Jesus of Lent beckons, come on over here. When you fail to forgive, you behave as if you are never in need of forgiveness yourself.

Spirit of God, fill our hearts with the humility and courage we need to forgive others when they sin against us.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

One Sign That Matters

This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. —Luke 11:29



Lent slips into our days to remind us that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Lent slips in to remind us that we are sinners in need of salvation. Lent reminds us that we are on death's doorstep but spiritual healing and liberation are available for the asking. And what do we do? We ask for a sign.

Our time, like all times, is impressed by signs. It knocks us for a loop when we hear that someone was cured of a deadly illness when he or she visited a certain place or a certain person or prayed just so. We, like the people of Jesus' time, have a tough time settling for faith alone. Signs and wonders, signs and wonders, we want miracles and cures. Proof, that's what we want.

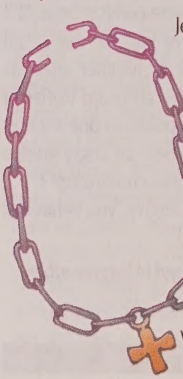
What better time than Lent to repent of our desire for such a proof? What better time than Lent to be satisfied with the only sign that matters, the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah?

Lord Jesus Christ, you died and were raised from the darkness of the tomb that you might live in us. Let your risen life in us be all the proof that we need.

THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Don't Deny Evil

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! —Matthew 7:11



Jesus has a way of saying things we like and don't like. Did Jesus merely exaggerate when he said that his listeners were evil? Whoa! Not good for the old self-esteem, there!

On the contrary, Lent is a time to recognize that we are, indeed, evil and capable of evil—small evils, perhaps, but mean little evils all the same. We recognize this not to make ourselves feel bad but because to do this is to know the truth . . . and the truth will make us free (John 8:32).

Only when we look our evil right in the eye and admit its existence, only then can God forgive us, save us, heal and free us. As long as we deny our sinfulness, we claim to be sinless and we don't see ourselves as we are; we live with an illusion.

We need to ask—that's the crux of the matter. During Lent we humble ourselves, we acknowledge that we are not in control, that we are, in fact, powerless. We must ask God our loving Father to give us all that we need. The wonder, the joy, the overwhelming happiness is that God "will give good things to those who ask."

You might say: Those who humble themselves will rejoice. Even during Lent.

Lord Jesus, help us to see our sinfulness for what it is, an opportunity to accept healing and peace from our heavenly Father, even now.

FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Justified By Faith

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. —Matthew 5:20

Fyodor Dostoevski, the great 19th century Russian novelist, in *The Brothers Karamazov* has one of his characters tell a story called "The Grand Inquisitor." In the story, Jesus returns and raises to life a little girl who had died. Watching, a 90-year-old Cardinal Inquisitor is displeased and has Jesus imprisoned. Visiting Jesus in his cell, the grim, gray Inquisitor berates Jesus for coming back. You left everything in our hands when you left, he says, and we have taken charge. People could not cope with the freedom you came to bring them, so we make laws and tell people what they may and may not do. It was a mistake for you to return.

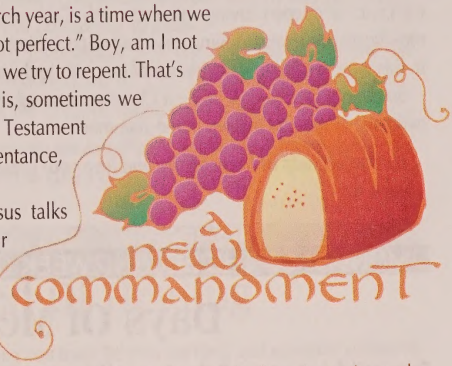
The Cardinal Inquisitor in Dostoevski's famous story echoes the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time who believed that "righteousness" consisted in a mere legalistic adherence to religious rules and regulations. On the contrary, Jesus says, true "righteousness" leaves behind religious legalism, as well as the false sense of security it can give. "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law" (Romans 3:28).

Lord Jesus, help us during Lent to become more and more a people of faith who trust in your love with all our hearts.

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Perfect Love

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. —Matthew 5:48



Lent, of all the seasons of the church year, is a time when we meditate on the theme, "OK, I'm not perfect." Boy, am I not perfect! We focus on our sinfulness, we try to repent. That's what Lent is for, after all. Trouble is, sometimes we have a funny idea of what the New Testament has in mind when it talks about repentance, conversion, and sin.

In Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus talks about our need to "be perfect" as our "heavenly Father is perfect," he doesn't mean what we may think he means. To be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect does not imply becoming a brightly painted plaster saint. Rather, as the lines just prior to the words of Jesus quoted above make clear, perfection means to love indiscriminately. God loves everyone, good and evil, and so should we. God does not seek to get revenge when people make bad choices, so neither should we. Our heavenly Father showers rain and sun on the good and bad alike. To be perfect as God is perfect is to act in a similar manner.

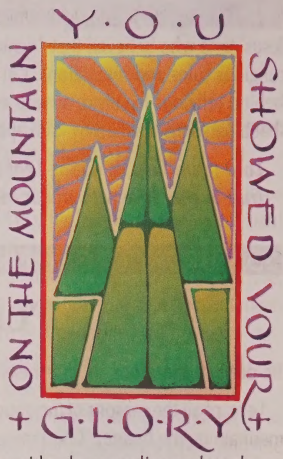
God our heavenly Father, help us to be perfect as you are perfect by showing love, compassion and forgiveness for all, the good and the bad alike.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Deeper Intimacy

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them. . . —Mark 9:2

What we want is proof. Right? We want proof that Jesus was the Son of God. So, along comes the Transfiguration and presto, there's our proof. And along comes the Resurrection and presto, there's the ultimate proof. Jesus was God. We have our proof. Ah, but countless people still do not believe, so the Transfiguration and Resurrection of Jesus must not be very good proof. Unbelievers may say, "Oh, those are just stories, they never really happened."



The Gospel writers had no intention of proving anything. They understood that even the Transfiguration and Resurrection of Jesus have little meaning apart from faith, apart from ongoing, everyday intimacy with the risen Christ. Let this, then, be our goal for Lent: to deepen loving intimacy with God and rededicate ourselves to loving service of our neighbor. In this way, we will give evidence of our faith to those with whom we live and work.

Someone once said: If being a Christian were against the law would there be enough evidence to get you thrown in the slammer?

Lord Jesus, help us to recognize and love your presence in the people we encounter each day.

MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Days Of Mercy

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. —Luke 6:36

Think of Lent as forty days to become more merciful. Imagine. We want mercy for ourselves, we pray for God to be merciful to us, but sometimes we find it so easy to withhold mercy from others. Truth to tell, sometimes mercy can be difficult.

How can parents be merciful to their young children and not slip into permissiveness? How can parents of teenagers be merciful to their offspring and still help them learn to be responsible? How can a teacher be merciful and still challenge students and help them grow? How can an employer dismiss an employee in a merciful way?

Mercy doesn't say, "It's OK that you did what you did." Mercy says, "It's not OK that you did what you did, but I'll forgive you and give you another chance to do it right." Mercy carries with it forgiveness and compassion, and since God is merciful to us, we are to show mercy to one another. Now there's a discipline for Lent!

God of mercy, help us to grow in mercy, forgiveness and compassion toward all those with whom we live and work.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Genuine Humility

All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. —Matthew 23:12

Uriah Heep is one of the most intriguing and despicable characters in all the stories Charles Dickens wrote. Even his name sounds vaguely repellant. Uriah Heep responds to a question from young David Copperfield, who asks if he is a lawyer. "'Me, Master Copperfield?' said Uriah. 'Oh, no! I'm a very 'umble person. . . I am well aware that I am the 'umblest person going. . . My mother is likewise a very 'umble person. We live in a 'umble abode, Master Copperfield. . . My father's former calling was 'umble.'"

Uriah Heep's humility is as phony as a three dollar bill. He pretends humility while plotting for his own advantage. He grovels in the presence of the wealthy and powerful in the hope that, by guile, someday he will be superior to them.

A truly humble person can take a compliment and not deny that he or she did something praiseworthy. "Thanks, I enjoyed doing it." Or, "You are very kind to say so." True humility gives thanks to God for the talent or ability to do what was done.

Lord Jesus, help us to be humble as you are humble, happy to serve others without denying our own dignity and worth in God's eyes.

WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

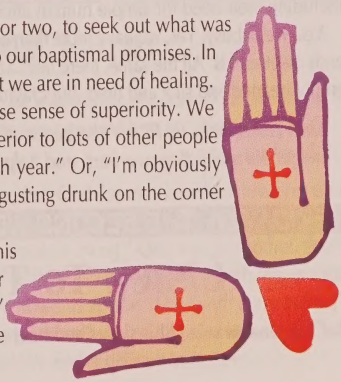
In Need Of Healing

. . .whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave. . . —Matthew 20:26-27

During Lent we are poised to learn a thing or two, to seek out what was lost, to shed whatever keeps us from fidelity to our baptismal promises. In other words, during Lent we acknowledge that we are in need of healing.

Sometimes we need to be healed of our false sense of superiority. We would never come right out with it: "I'm superior to lots of other people because of the amount of money I make each year." Or, "I'm obviously better than that lazy street person or that disgusting drunk on the corner over there."

The Jesus of Matthew's Gospel crooks his finger in our direction and says, Come on over here for half a minute. The only "superior" ones around here are the ones who look the least superior. How does that grab ya?



Who are the great ones? The wealthy and powerful? Could any of these be great as Jesus describes greatness? You never know.

It's all in how we approach our life, as service or as self-promotion. As a way to be last or a way to be first. . .

Lord Jesus, help us to see how we are called to serve and be last in the unique vocation you give to each of us.

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Don't Ignore The Needy

There was a rich man. . . And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus . . .who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table. . . —Luke 16:19-21

Oh, how we sometimes wish that faith was a simple matter just between God and each one of us! God and me, that's a lot simpler to deal with than God and me and the people I encounter each day. Other people complicate things, especially when I find other people unpleasant to be around. Everyone has more than one Lazarus to deal with. Lent challenges us to recognize Lazarus in those we meet each day and those we live and work with. Even if they do not hunger for food, they do hunger for recognition, respect, affirmation and affection.

Note that the sin of the rich man in Jesus' story was not being rich. His sin was ignoring the needs of Lazarus, his hunger, his sickness, his poverty. The repentance Lent calls for includes turning away from our inclination to isolate ourselves from the needs of others, including their need for simple human affection.

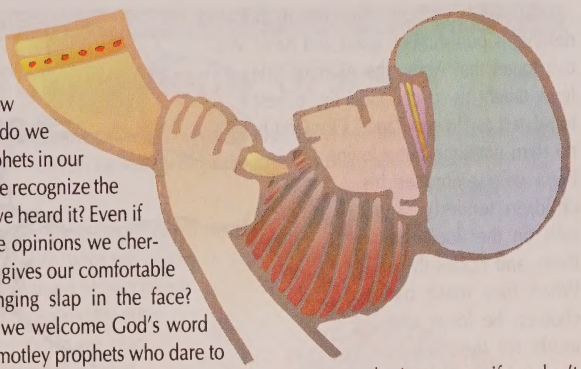
Yes, we're busy. Yes, we have more than enough to do. Yes, we have a tough time making ends meet as it is. All the same, there lies Lazarus at our door, hungry and sick, perhaps just empty-hearted and sick and tired, but craving the crumbs of our love all the same.

Lord Jesus, help us to see the needs of Lazarus in our children, our spouse, our neighbors and fellow workers, and help us respond with generosity.

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Listen To The Prophets

But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.
—Matthew 21:35



How well do we listen for the God's word in our own day? How sharp a lookout do we keep for the prophets in our world? Would we recognize the word of God if we heard it? Even if it contradicts the opinions we cherish so? Even if it gives our comfortable prejudices a ringing slap in the face? Even then, will we welcome God's word and the maybe motley prophets who dare to speak it? Even then? Could it be that we sometimes ignore and reject—even if we don't beat and kill—those who speak the word of God in our time and place?

Ah, could it be? (Not I, Lord?)

How could she be a prophet, how could she speak the word of God for our time? Impossible! She's so liberal! How could he possibly echo God's own truth? He's so conservative! She makes no connections between faith and economics, therefore she's wrong. He doesn't see that religion and politics do not mix, therefore what he says has nothing to do with the truth.

Is it possible that some of our opinions, though we hold them dear, could—just maybe—be wrong? Lent is a good time to become a bit more open minded.

God the loving Father of all, help us to place our hope and trust less in our opinions and prejudices and more in your love for us.

SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

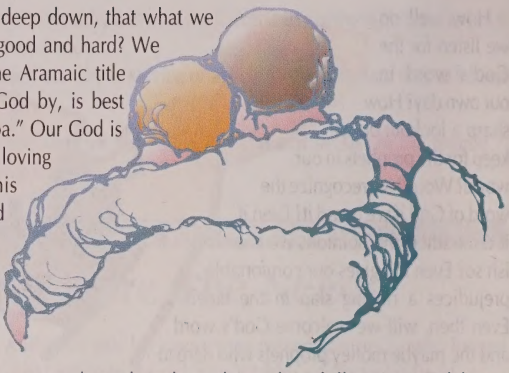
Our Loving Papa

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

—Luke 15:20

Sometimes it is utterly difficult to believe that God loves us with a love beyond understanding. In the parable of the prodigal son, we have no trouble identifying with the younger son who "squandered his property in dissolute living." One way or another, that's us all right. But we do find it hard to believe that if we, too, trudge back with repentance on our mind, God, while we are "still far off," will see us and be "filled with compassion," that our loving Father will run "and put his arms around" us and kiss us. How could God throw compassion around so indiscriminately? We find it difficult to believe. . .

Don't we all believe, deep down, that what we deserve is punishment, good and hard? We can forget that Abba, the Aramaic title Jesus taught us to call God by, is best translated as "loving Papa." Our God is no stern patriarch but a loving Papa who embraces his children tenderly, and rolls on the floor with them, and tickles them. When they make bad choices, he longs anxiously for their return, ready to forgive before they even ask, ready to throw the mother of all parties to celebrate.



God our loving Papa, help us to have no reluctance to return to you, to throw ourselves with complete trust into your loving arms.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

What Do We Worship?

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

—John 2:15

So much for "Jesus meek and mild." There's a place for righteous anger—not to say self-righteous anger. There's a time to call a spade a spade. Lent is an excellent time to set aside our inclination to shrug our shoulders and say, helplessly, "There's nothing I can do about it." When we recognize injustice our faith obliges us to oppose it, if only by a letter or two to our representatives in government. When there is no peace, our faith obliges us to work for peace by our prayers and by whatever means we can drum up.

Jesus created a commotion because people made his "Father's house a marketplace" (John 2:16). Where there should have been prayer and worship he found buying and selling. But what if we recall St. Paul's conviction that each of us is a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19)? We live in a culture that positively encourages us to make of ourselves temples of buying and selling. It's called being a good consumer, and its highest act of worship is "getting a good deal."

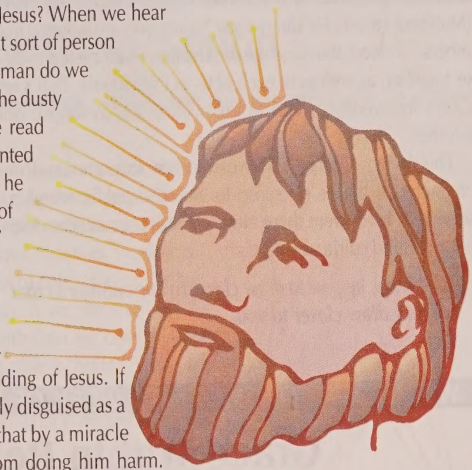
The love of God and neighbor should be enthroned in the temple of our heart. Do we too often worship there the great god Consumerism? Lent is a good time to change our ways.

Lord Jesus, help us to give our heart completely to the love of God and neighbor.

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

The Authority Of Jesus

They . . . led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.
—Luke 4:29-30



What do we believe about Jesus? When we hear the name of Jesus spoken, what sort of person enters our mind? What sort of man do we think he was when he walked the dusty roads of Palestine? When we read that the people of Nazareth wanted to push Jesus off a cliff, but he "passed through the midst of them and went on his way," what do we think happened? It depends on our assumptions about who Jesus was.

Lent calls us to a more balanced, more adult understanding of Jesus. If we think Jesus was God merely disguised as a human being, we may think that by a miracle Jesus stopped the people from doing him harm. Or maybe he became invisible and escaped that way. If we take Jesus' humanity as seriously as we take his divinity, however, it may make more sense to suggest that simply because he had a certain "authority" (Luke 4:32), when push came to shove—no pun intended—Jesus could walk through the midst of those who thought he would be a pushover—pun intended.

This man, both fully human and fully divine, was on a mission no one could stop.

God our loving Father, help us during Lent to come to a deeper, more mature understanding of Jesus, your Son.

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

A Community Of Worship

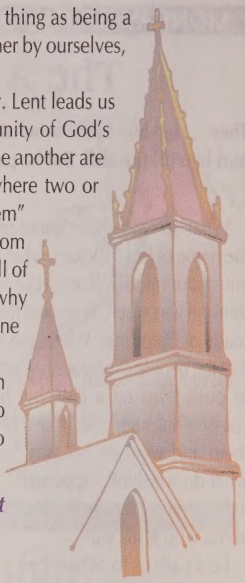
Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?" —Matthew 18:21

In a world that encourages us to always think "I" and "me," the Gospel leads us to think

"we" and "us." We're all in this together. There's no such thing as being a Christian in private. There is no "God and me" off in a corner by ourselves, it's always all of us together.

Lent leads us to repent of carrying individualism too far. Lent leads us to renew our commitment to membership in the community of God's people, the human race, because our relationships with one another are tied directly to our relationship with God. Jesus said "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20). He did not say "when you are isolated from others." Indeed, the message of salvation is addressed to all of us together, as well as to each of us as individuals. That's why God's forgiveness is tied to our willingness to forgive one another.

This is why liturgy and worship are so communal in character. It makes no sense to attend a public worship service as if we were there alone. Lent is a good season to leave behind spiritual privatism.

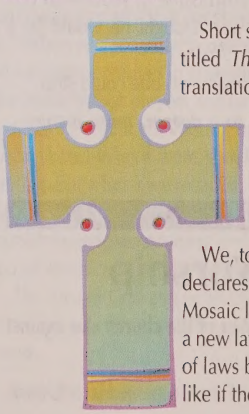


Lord Jesus, help us to draw closer to one another so that we may draw closer to you.

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Grace Within Reach

. . .whoever does [these laws] and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. —Matthew 5:19



Short story writer and novelist Flannery O'Connor wrote a book titled *The Violent Bear It Away*, a line she took from an older translation of Matthew 11:12: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent bear it away." O'Connor once heard from the owner of a bookstore that someone called to ask if the bookstore had a copy of Flannery O'Connor's book, "The Bear That Ran Away With It."

We, too, sometimes get our information scrambled. When Jesus declares in Matthew's Gospel that he has not come to abolish the Mosaic law, but to fulfill it, notice that he fulfills the law by offering a new law—the Sermon on the Mount—which is not so much a set of laws but a description of what the life of his followers will look like if they are faithful to the Gospel.

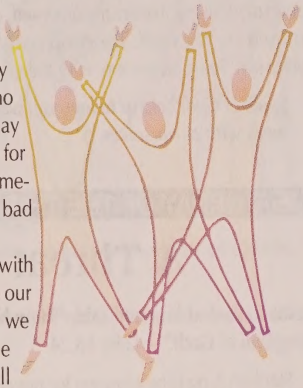
Basic to Jesus' teaching are his words that we are called not just to be aware of, reflect upon, or teach his way, but to actually live it. There, of course, is the rub. The Gospel is easy to talk about, difficult to live, but with the grace of God it's well within our reach.

God our loving Father, help us to meditate on the word of the Gospel prayerfully, but even more help us to live it every day.

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Love In Action

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
—Luke 11:23



Lent slips in and out of our days and nights, and sin enters our life in two ways, by things we do and things we don't do. The Gospel calls us to actively choose a life of prayer and love in action. There is no in-between. We're either hot or cold. Hop on the hay wagon or get out of the way. If we don't choose for ourselves a life based on faith then we choose something else, and something else is bound to be bad news.

The tough part is to grasp what it means to be with Jesus in terms of our everyday life, in our family, in our work, in our friendships. Sometimes, of course, we can discern what to do or say. But other times the loving thing to do isn't so clear, and at such times all we can do is will that God's will be done and entrust the person or situation to God's love.

If the only time we actively engage our faith and love for God and neighbor is once a week when we slide into a pew in church, our spirituality is a couple of fries short of a Happy Meal.

Lord Jesus, help us through prayer and mutual support to draw closer to the way of life you would have your disciples follow in today's world.

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Our "Other Selves"

. . ."to love [the Lord our God] with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength," and "to love one's neighbor as oneself,"—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. —Mark 12:33

When we get down to brass tacks, making sacrifices—"giving up" whatever we may give up for Lent—has a goal we may overlook, and that is to deepen our awareness that my neighbor is not foreign to me but is, in truth, my other self. The reason for Lent, and the disciplines of Lent, is to deepen our active love for God and neighbor, which means the people we live and work with. To do this is to "love my neighbor as myself."

It takes faith to believe that, in fact, my neighbor is my other self. My spouse is my other self. My children are my other self. The people I gather in church with are my other self, and so are the people who gather in other places of worship, and those who don't gather to worship at all. Even more challenging, people I don't particularly like are my other self, too. The two-year-old or the teenager who drives me crazy is my other self. The person who dents my car in the supermarket parking lot is my other self. Jesus invites me, with the grace of God, to love these people, too.

Spirit of God, help us to love you with our whole being and to love those we live and work with as ourselves.

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

A Threat To Happiness

Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" —Luke 18:24

Stephen King is best known for novels designed to stand the reader's hair on end. Now and then, along the way he also offers the occasional spiritual insight. For example, in his novel, *Needful Things*, one of Stephen King's characters asks: "Why is it that so many people think that all the answers are in their wallet?"

We spend so much time thinking about money. We worry about not having enough. We worry about not being able to pay our bills, which sometimes follows the imprudent use of credit, that is, buying what we can't afford. More than that, we dream of having vast amounts of money. State lotteries are immensely popular. If only we could win the lottery, we think, all our worries would be over.

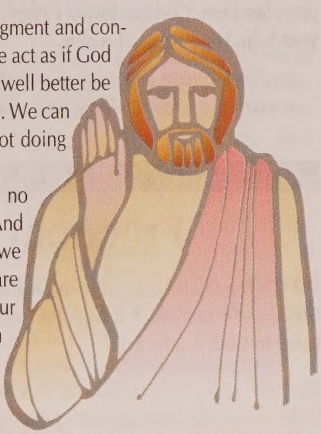
Surely unemployment or not having enough income to live with a modicum of financial security and comfort is a serious problem. But the opposite extreme, being wealthy, can threaten one's happiness now and in eternity. We who struggle to make ends meet find this difficult to fathom, but it's true. Wealth is a dangerous thing.

Spirit of God, help us to have the financial resources we need to get along in the world, but help us to trust in you alone.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jesus Saves

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. —John 3:17



Sometimes we have this peculiar idea that judgment and condemnation is what the Christian faith is about. We act as if God sent his Son to judge and condemn and we darn well better be frightened out of our wits about it most of the time. We can be saved, but only if we live right, and we're not doing such a great job of it so far.

Au contraire, as the French say. Jesus judges no one, and Jesus condemns no one. "Jesus saves." And it's a good thing, too, because the more aware we become of our sinfulness, the more inclined we are to throw in the towel. Instead, being aware of our sinfulness should lead us to place our hope in God alone. We can save money in the bank, but we can't save ourselves. We don't deserve it, scoundrels, rascals and cads that we are. But our loving Father loves us and wants us to be with him now, in this world, and for all eternity. All we have to do is accept the invitation.

God our loving Father, help us to believe more deeply in your loving concern for us, and help us to abandon ourselves entirely to you.

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

God's Children

Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him. . . —John 4:50

What did Jesus know about the joys and pains of parenthood? He did not marry and he had no children. What did he know of what takes place in the heart of a parent, from the birth of the child until the child is grown? The joy and anguish of parenthood never ends, and then your kids have kids and you get a whole new set of ecstasies and agonies. But what did Jesus know of this?

Lent would beckon us to read through the Gospels with such questions in mind and, marvel of marvels, we discover important occasions when Jesus responded with deep compassion and mercy to parents whose children needed help. He heals children, he

raises them back to life, he embraces them. Jesus grew up in a family, he had been a child himself, and he remembered. . .

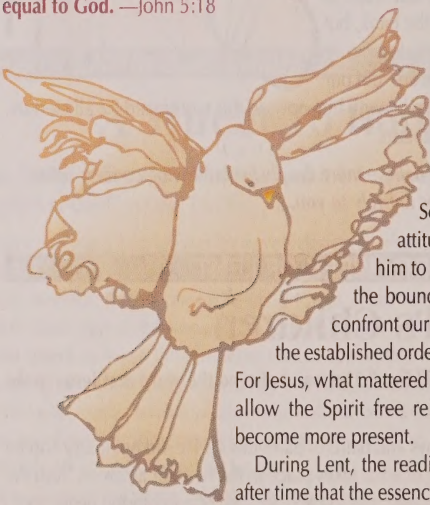
Parents, Lent invites us to entrust our children, no matter what their ages, into the care of the risen Christ, who cares. Our children cover the spectrum from wonderfully gifted and successful to struggling, afflicted, confused and disturbed. But, while they are our children they are, even more, God's children. During Lent we can make a special effort to pray: See here, God our loving Father, these children of yours need you and they need your help. How about it? Amen.

Lord Jesus, just as you responded with mercy to parents when you walked this earth, so take care of our children who need you now.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Freedom In The Spirit

For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God. —John 5:18



Years ago, funnyman Bill Cosby used to tell a story about being the father of an infant daughter. He explained that one thing he would not do was change diapers. "Do not like surprises," he quipped. Sometimes we're the same in our attitude toward Jesus. We don't want him to do anything unexpected or outside the boundaries. We don't want anything to confront our faith that might throw into question the established order. "We've always done it this way." For Jesus, what mattered was not established tradition but to allow the Spirit free rein so the kingdom of God could become more present.

During Lent, the readings from Scripture remind us time after time that the essence of faith is, by God's grace, to love God and neighbor. If a law obstructs peace or a tradition bars justice, perhaps they no longer serve their original purpose. If obedience to a rule or regulation is a barrier to loving intimacy with God and neighbor, perhaps that rule or regulation has outlived its usefulness.

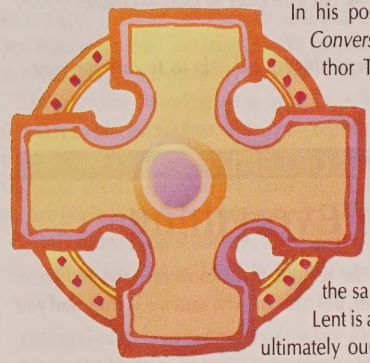
God our loving Father, help us to be faithful to you in all things, and give us the courage to obey your will, for in your will is our only peace.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Pure Faith

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

—John 5:24



In his posthumously published journal, *A Vow of Conversation,* the famous Trappist monk and author Thomas Merton wrote: "I heard and I believed. And I believe that [God] has called me freely, out of pure mercy, to His love and salvation. That at the end, to which all is directed by His will, I shall see Him after I have put off my body in death and have risen together with Him to take up my body again. That at the last day all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Lent is a time to purify our faith, to realize anew that ultimately our faith can be faith in God alone. We talk about having faith in oneself, faith in the economy, faith in the leaders of our church, faith in the leaders of our country. Many people place a lot of faith in money. All the faith we place in things other than God simply shows how weak our faith is. We have the most difficult time believing that God called each of us "freely, out of pure mercy, to His love and salvation." We find it almost impossible to believe that we have already "passed from death to life," and that therefore there is no further need to be fearful and anxious. But with God's help we can do it.

God of faithful love, help us to place our faith in you alone and to truly believe that we already have eternal life.

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Give God The Glory

How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? —John 5:44

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), an English author, wrote a bestselling novel called *Monk,* and the author basked in the adulation of high society. Lord Byron, the poet, saw Lewis one day with red eyes and "air sentimental," and asked him what was the matter. "I am so deeply affected by kindness," Lewis said, "and just now the Duchess of

York said something so kind to me. . ." And the tears began to flow again. "Never mind, Lewis," said a colonel who was standing nearby, "never mind, don't cry. She couldn't mean it."

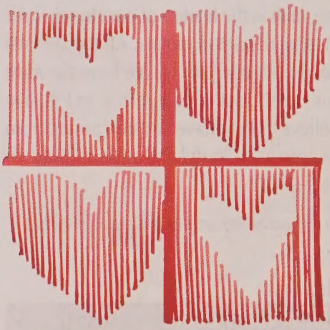
We take the praise of others so seriously. Sometimes we go out of our way to try to get others to praise what we have done. But how much do we care that what we do be praiseworthy in the eyes of God? Lent calls us to remember that human praise can be empty and self-serving. We should accept a compliment politely but not take it too seriously. The main question is: Does what we did give glory to God, no matter in how small a fashion?

Lord God, help us to give glory to you in all things, and help us to care for your approval beyond all human praise.

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

The Heart Of Everything

Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him." —John 7:28



Years ago, there was a popular book called *Your God is Too Small.* The point of the book was to help the reader understand that many ideas of God are either inadequate, unfaithful to Scripture, or both. The author suggested that many people behave as if God were a cosmic policeman. Others think of God as a "hanging judge" devoid of all mercy. Many of us, the author said, try to put God in a mental box, the better to maintain control of God. If our God is in a clearly defined box, we won't have to be open to new ideas about God.

In Jesus we see God alive among us, but it is impossible for the tiny human intellect to ever grasp God completely. St. Thomas Aquinas said that the first thing we must say about God is that we can say nothing. Then we may go about reflecting upon our experience of the Divine Mystery. Because we can never fully understand God, of course, that does not mean that we can never know God. We can know God by love. We can experience God as the very heart of everything else we experience. We can be lovingly intimate with God in prayer, and we can be intimate with God by caring for those with whom we live and work.

God our loving Father, help us to know you more each day; help us to draw closer to you in love.

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Holy In The Ordinary

Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?" —John 7:41

We all have our own little Galilees. You think you can find God in the middle of your workplace? Think again! Someone said that I could pray while driving on the freeway to and from work, but I just laughed. We cannot find God except in church. The best place to find God is in a monastery. The Holy One is found only in holy places!

These are fine-sounding ideas, except they're wrong. The Messiah came from the most ordinary of places: Galilee. More than ordinary, it had a reputation for being outside the mainstream, a place where bumpkins lived. Maybe the people of Jesus' time told "Galilean jokes." The Messiah could not possibly come from there. Except he did. Just as we are likely to encounter the Lord our God in the most unlikely places.

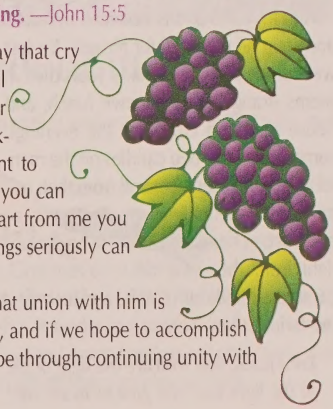
Lent is a time to open our eyes to the holy in the ordinary, to repent of our prejudice that we must go someplace "holy" before we can find God and commune with the Holy of Holies.

Loving God, help us to be more sensitive to your presence in the ordinary times and places, and help us to turn to you more often in the course of our everyday affairs.

SUNDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Begin Here And Now

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. —John 15:5



There are so many voices in our world today that cry out, "Apart from me you can do nothing!" All we need do is watch television for half an hour any time of the day or night and we hear hucksters for everything from underarm deodorant to station wagons. They declare, "Apart from me you can do nothing;" or perhaps what they say is, "Apart from me you *are* nothing." On the contrary, to take such things seriously can only lead to spiritual death.

Jesus, for his part, reminds us during Lent that union with him is the key to eternal life beginning here and now, and if we hope to accomplish anything worthwhile in this world it can only be through continuing unity with him.

A woman, age 80, said: "I was very busy during my lifetime. I was a wife, a mother and a teacher, and I was always involved in so many volunteer activities, especially after I retired. All those things were good, but I failed to see that what mattered most was the love with which I did all the things I did. If I had known that I would have given more time to prayer."

Spirit of God, help us to live in union with your Son, Jesus, and to be guided by your Spirit in all that we do.

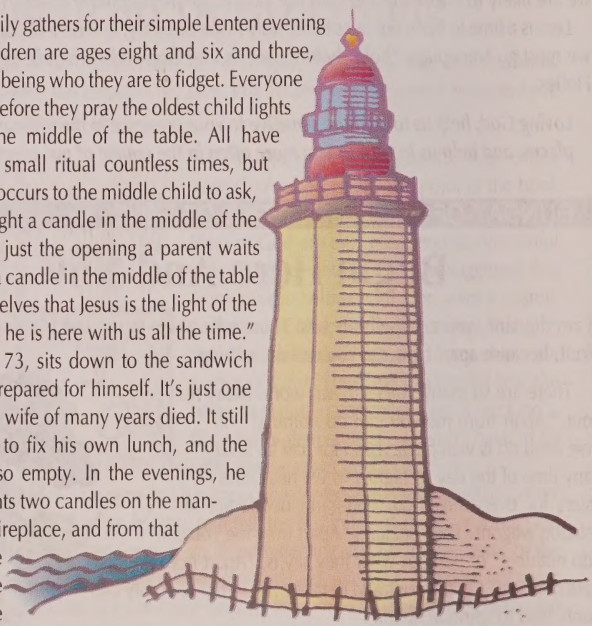
MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Light Of The World

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." —John 8:12

A young family gathers for their simple Lenten evening meal. The children are ages eight and six and three, and it is part of being who they are to fidget. Everyone is seated, but before they pray the oldest child lights a candle in the middle of the table. All have witnessed this small ritual countless times, but this evening it occurs to the middle child to ask, "Why do we light a candle in the middle of the table?" This is just the opening a parent waits for. "We light a candle in the middle of the table to remind ourselves that Jesus is the light of the world and that he is here with us all the time."

A man, age 73, sits down to the sandwich and soup he prepared for himself. It's just one week since his wife of many years died. It still seems strange to fix his own lunch, and the house seems so empty. In the evenings, he sometimes lights two candles on the mantel above the fireplace, and from that he takes some comfort. The light from the candles reminds him that he and his wife still go on together, only now their union is more mysterious than ever.

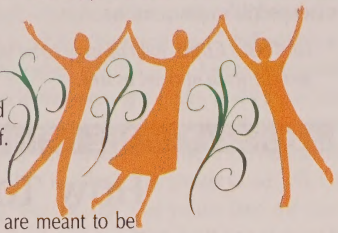


Lord Jesus, you who are the light of the world, help us to see life and the world only in the light that you give us to see by.

TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Not Of This World

He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." —John 8:23



When Jesus told his critics, those who would plot his death, that he was "from above," while they were "of this world," he said as much about us as he did about himself. Because we are really but invisibly united with Jesus through baptism, whatever he says about himself applies to us, as well. Therefore, we are meant to be "from above" just as he was. In a very real way, we are to be "not of this world." Lent is the ideal time to ponder what this should mean for our everyday life.

Does being "from above" mean we are to be other-worldly and walk around like spiritual space cadets? Hardly. Does being "not of this world" mean that the concerns of this world are of no concern to us? No way. The challenge of the Gospel is much greater. We are to bring the truth and grace of the Gospel into the world and do what we can to change the world around us.

Indeed, the example of our lives may well be a better form of evangelization than preaching. As someone once said, Christians are to proclaim the Gospel in everything they do and use words if necessary.

Spirit of God, help us each day to live in and for the world according to the spirit of the Gospel.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Truth's Freedom

If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. —John 8:31-32

Lent is the season par excellence for coming to a greater sense of truth and the freedom it brings. We want to have a better understanding of the truth about ourselves; that is, we want to see ourselves as God sees us. And how does God see us? Because in baptism we become brothers and sisters of the risen Christ, God sees us in that way.

God loves each of us with a love that is endless and unconditional. No strings attached. More often than not, this is such good news that it seems too good to be true. Yet our acceptance of this truth will bring freedom of mind and heart, freedom not only from what hinders us, but freedom to actively choose the path of true disciples of Christ.

It's easy to crave "freedom from" restraints, not so easy to embrace "freedom to" act lovingly. If I'm free to live as a true disciple of Christ, that means I'm free to stick my neck out now and then. I'm free to take a risk based on faith, because that's a big part of what faith means. I'm free to risk commitments to others, and I'm free to risk depending on God instead of myself. I'm free to risk believing in God's love for me instead of believing in other people's opinion of me.

Lord Jesus Christ, help us truly to be your disciples so that we may know the truth and the truth may set us free.

THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

How To Die Well

Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death. —John 8:51

William Saroyan, the great American writer of fiction and drama, phoned the Associated Press in 1981 after he learned that he had a terminal illness. He dictated this statement to be released upon his death: "Everybody has got to die, but I have always believed that an exception would be made in my case. Now what?"

With Saroyan, we leave death in the abstract when it comes to ourselves. After all, we haven't died yet, have we? Other people die, not us. Then when it happens it comes as a shock, instead of as a natural part of life, to be expected. "Death is the fruit of a whole life," said Maximilian Kolbe, who died in a World War II Nazi concentration camp.

Jesus not only showed us how to live, he showed us how to die. But we tend to overlook the latter. Jesus put complete trust in his heavenly Father because he knew that death is a transformation, not an end. The end we call death is an ending only the way a seed falling into the earth comes to an end. Just as no one could predict the flower that comes from the plain little seed, so no one can predict the new life we will discover on the other side of death.

We take joy in the flower, and we will take joy in the completely delightful experience that awaits us when we die.

God our loving Father, help us face up to the fact of our own death and, by faith, to see beyond to the life that awaits us.

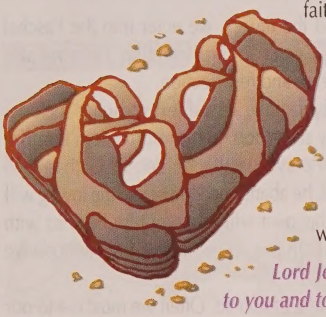
FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Faith In The Risen Christ

The Jews said, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human, are making yourself God." —John 10:33

Sometimes we wonder what Jesus looked like. We have questions about the Jesus his first disciples knew. What kind of personality did he have? For the most part, we will never know the answers to these questions. Scripture scholars tell us that there is no reason to believe that Jesus looked like anything but an ordinary first-century Palestinian peasant, very much like the people who populate that part of the world today.

Lent is a good season to renew our appreciation for what theologians call "the Jesus of faith." It is not the "historical Jesus" that matters so much, rather it is the risen Jesus present and active in our midst and in the world today that matters. It matters that Jesus was born and lived a human life, of course, because that means that our own lives have a far greater value. Still, it is the "Jesus of faith" that matters here and now, and it is the risen Christ that we encounter in word, sacrament, and one another.



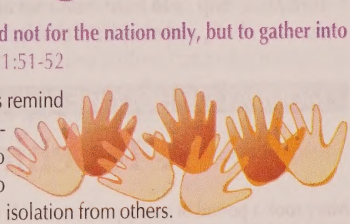
Lord Jesus Christ, help us to give ourselves entirely to you and to the service of your people here and now.

SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Disciples Together

. . . Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. —John 11:51-52

Time after time, during Lent, the Scriptures remind us that central to the Christian life is reconciliation among people and the call for people to strive for unity. Love of God and neighbor go hand in hand. There's no being a Christian in isolation from others. We bring our relationships with other people to our relationship with God, and we bring our relationship with God to our relationships with other people. So central is this truth that the Gospel of John declares that the reason Jesus died was to bring about unity among "the dispersed children of God."



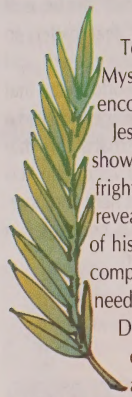
Lent carries a challenge, then, to work for unity not only among Christians but among all of God's people. Of course, we need to begin with those to whom we are closest, our family, our friends, our wider community. Unity begins with families striving to overcome the ways society scatters them today. Is there at least one time each week when we can all be together?

Lord Jesus Christ, gather into one the members of your family, beginning with our own family and spreading out to encompass all of God's people.

PASSION SUNDAY / PALM SUNDAY

Teaching Us To Live

Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.
—Luke 22:42



Today, through the Scriptures and the liturgy, we enter into the Paschal Mystery with Jesus, the mystery of his death and resurrection. Here we also encounter the mystery of our own death and resurrection.

Jesus teaches us how to live. But part of the lesson Jesus teaches includes showing us how to die so that we may share, too, in his resurrection. Death is frightening, Jesus acknowledges. His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane reveals that he did not want to die. Still, he abandoned himself to the loving will of his Father. He acknowledged that his own will might not be best, so with complete trust he set aside his own will. In this, Jesus shows us the attitude we need to have toward death, as well.

Death happens many times in our life, of course. Often we must die to our own ego, our own preferences, in order to love others. Often it can be an act of love to say to someone else, "This is what I would like, but this time I would like to do what you prefer." This is one of the basics that makes a marriage, a family, a community possible.

Lord Jesus, help us to learn from your attitude toward death how we must accept our own death, and many little deaths, in order to know eternal life even now.

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

A Touching Gesture

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. —John 12:3

In all the Gospels, women often provide a witness that strikes closer to the heart of the matter than do the men. As we begin Holy Week, we will benefit if we pay close attention to how women act throughout the drama of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Life isn't all nuts and bolts, and we need to be concerned about more than just keeping our nose to the grindstone, the women of the Gospels tell us. Bravado and saber-rattling are empty gestures without genuine courage. Dollars and cents have their limits. Style matters, aesthetics have their place, and sometimes a symbolic gesture says volumes more than all the abstractions we can muster up.

Mary spends a lot on expensive perfume that has no practical purpose whatsoever, and why? Perhaps because she understands, somehow, that Jesus needs some simple human comfort. With a gesture touching, warm, even sensual, she applies the perfume and wipes Jesus' feet with her hair. All because it seems the right thing to do, the caring thing to do.

God of tender compassion, help us to be impractical sometimes in ways that will help us to love you and those close to us more faithfully.

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Love Makes A Disciple

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
—John 13:35

Lent quickly draws to a close, and as we approach the holiest days in the Christian liturgical year we would do well to reflect that when all is said and done, love is what it's all about.

Say a radio or television interviewer stopped people on the street and asked, "How can you tell if someone is a Christian?" Chances are people would identify things like going to church on Sunday, reading the Bible, and praying. Some might say that people are Christian if they "accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior." Others might say a person is a Christian if he or she obeys the laws and teachings of the church.

The perspective of the Gospels is different. Love for one another, that's what marks us as disciples of Jesus. Of course, the Gospels mean active love in the real world, not love in theory. Do the people we say we love actually *feel loved* by us?

Lord Jesus, help us to love one another in ways that make a difference in people's lives, so we may truly be your disciples.

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Denying Christ

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver.
—Matthew 26:14-15

The story of the death of Jesus is a story of betrayal and greed. Always we must ask ourselves, is there something of the betrayal and greed of Judas in us? No one wants to identify with Judas, he is such an evil character. Still, still . . . how often do we act in ways that deny our faith and our relationship with Christ? How often do we ration our love for

God and neighbor, thus denying our faith, if not for thirty pieces of silver then for "a more affluent lifestyle," or to gain the admiration of unbelievers or those whose only religion is the cult of the consumer culture?

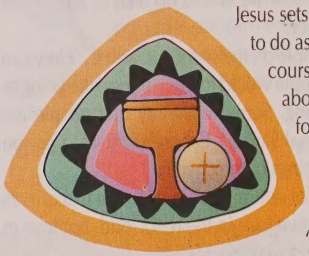
As we face the final hours of Lent, the Gospel calls us to repent of the ways in which we deny Christ and our faith for what cannot last, for the glitter of cheap baubles or the insubstantial security of what cannot ultimately be trusted. The Christ of Lent invites us to trust in him alone, to give our heart to him alone, and to follow him alone, even as he walks the way of the cross and stretches out his hands for the nails. For this alone, he says, is the way to eternal life, even in this life.

Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of our baptism may we follow you along the way of the cross, sharing in your death that we might share in your resurrection.

HOLY THURSDAY

An Example Of Love

I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. —John 13:15



Jesus sets an example and directs his disciples, very simply, to do as he has done. He washes the feet of his disciples, of course. But everything we learn from the New Testament about Jesus and his way forms the example we are to follow. As Jesus became a servant and cared for us, so by God's grace, we are to care for and serve one another. This is the heart of the Gospel message and the heart of the lesson Lent teaches us.

"Do this in remembrance of me," (1 Corinthians 11:23-24) Jesus said, and we may take this to mean not only that we are to follow him in the Eucharist. Prior to this, "in remembrance of him" we are to give ourselves to a life of servanthood, "washing one another's feet" in countless ways, caring, loving, serving, bearing one another's burdens. It is only when we "wash one another's feet" that the Eucharist has the fullness of meaning given it by Jesus at the Last Supper. "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

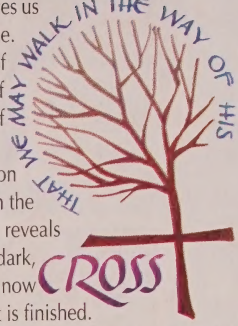
Lord Jesus, help us to be your presence in our world, caring for one another, serving and loving without calculating the cost.

GOOD FRIDAY

Love Speaks

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. —John 19:30

Our journey to Jerusalem with Jesus is complete, and it leaves us standing at the foot of the cross. But we do not stand there alone. We are surrounded by countless fellow believers and, of course, there are the women: ". . . standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25).



Good Friday is the culmination of Lent, the church's season of repentance and conversion, and it is finished. We stand in the shadow of the cross, waiting. The tomb is sealed, only faith reveals that this is not the end. Still, everything is so dark. Yet in the dark, love speaks, an eternal love that shows us how to live and now shows us how to die. The sky is empty, we wait in silence. It is finished.

What have we learned on our journey to Jerusalem? Do we know ourselves better? Are we freer to respond to the guidance of the Spirit in our daily life? Regardless, all around there are echoes of liberation, rumors of grace. If we listen, angels on their way, angels with a message of eternal joy and eternal hope. . .

God our loving Father, we abandon ourselves to your love on this day of darkness when your Son died for us and was buried in the tomb.

HOLY SATURDAY / EASTER VIGIL

The In-Between Day

Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. —Mark 16:6

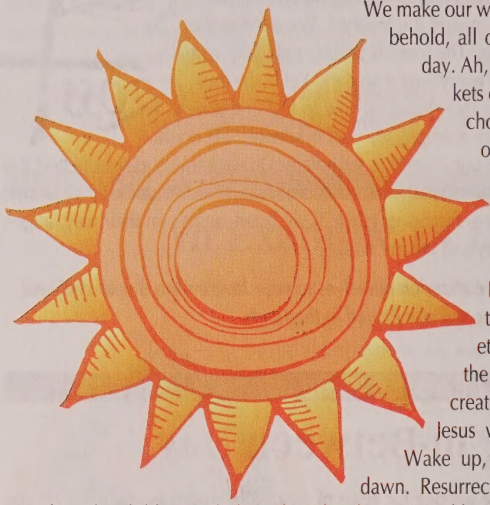
The women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus had to take the word of "a young man, dressed in a white robe" (Mark 16:5) that Jesus was raised and that he was going ahead of them to Galilee, just as he had told them he would. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome saw nothing but a huge stone rolled back and the empty tomb donated by Joseph of Arimathea. No wonder they were scared out of their wits. No wonder they said nothing to anybody even though the mysterious young man—an angel, surely—directed them to deliver a message to Peter and the other disciples.

Holy Saturday is the in-between day. The somber mood of Good Friday is over, but the resounding joy of Easter is yet to come. Waiting, waiting, staring into an empty tomb. Wondering. Could it be? The sun passes across the sky one time with no clear messages; nothing is definite until the sun sets, the darkness descends . . . and then will come the hour of fire and rejoicing in the face of a mystery the human mind will never comprehend but which the human heart embraces with eternal joy.

Lord Jesus, risen Christ, fill our hearts with the new life won by your death and resurrection, and help us to share this new life with the world.

A Wonder To Tell

But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. —Mark 16:11



We make our way through Lent, and lo and behold, all of a sudden it's Easter Sunday. Ah, we say, Spring is here. Baskets of candy and gaily wrapped chocolate rabbits for the wee ones. Easter egg hunts. In the old days, the ladies might have a new "bonnet" for Easter. Ah, Easter.

Do we stop to reflect that Easter is so much more than this? Easter Sunday makes an eternally cosmic explosion at the heart of the universe and all creation. Resurrection! Ah, yes, Jesus was raised from the dead. Wake up, cries the guardian of the dawn. Resurrection! Do we simply smile sweetly at the children with their chocolate bunnies and let it go at that?

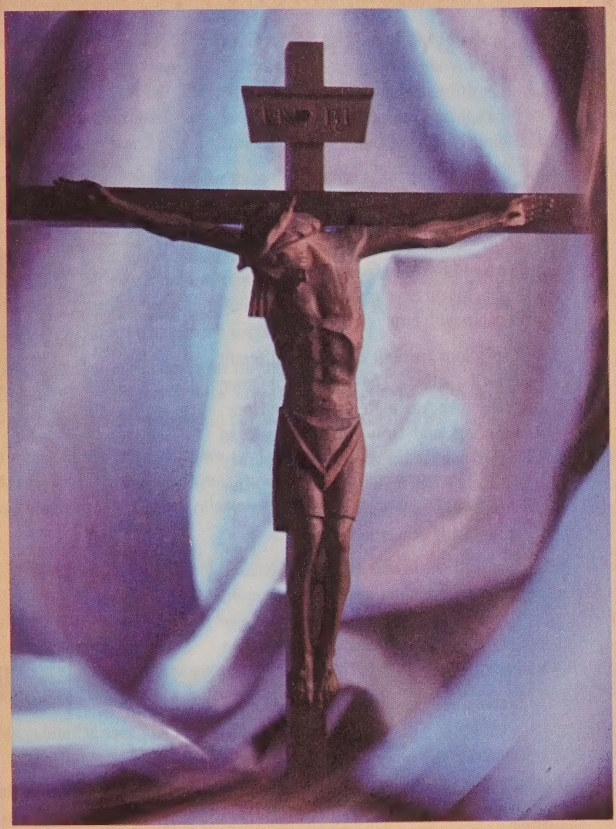
"Resurrection," of course, is a troublesome word. Truth to tell, we don't really know what it means. "Resurrection" happened to Jesus, and it will happen to us, but we don't yet know exactly what it means. We call the Resurrection a mystery, but that solves nothing, because this mystery is an event that blasts an opening in the created world order where God slips through with wonders to tell.

That's what Easter is, a wonder to tell, a mystery we begin to experience even now. It is a mystery that fires the faith of those who believe in this "first raised" Jesus, and who believe that after their death, they will see the face of God. A wonder to tell, so let's tell it. Near and far.

Lord Jesus, Risen Christ, fill us with the power of your risen life, that we might proclaim the wonders of your Father's love by the way we live, day in and day out. Amen.

On To Jerusalem was written by Mitch Finley and is published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. Cover photo by Gene Plaisted. Copyright 1994. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

THE ROAD BACK TO GOD



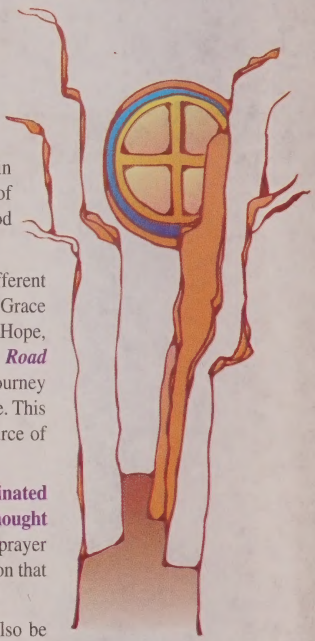
DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR LENT

—BY LARRY W. NEEB—

THE ROAD BACK TO GOD

DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR LENT

—BY LARRY W. NEEB—



Throughout history many Christians have described the season of Lent as a spiritual journey. This year let it be a treasure hunt! Don't stop hunting until you discover a deeper and richer relationship with God. The truth, of course, is that we can never find God unless he first finds us. Such is the nature of fallen humanity whose search for God must begin with repentance. ***The Road Back To God*** is a series of Lenten meditations to help you in your search for God and a faithful relationship with him.

These six weeks of devotions are built around six different themes: You Count in God's Eyes, The Meaning of Grace in Our Lives, How to Believe Again, Rediscovering Hope, The Mystery of Suffering, and Holy Week. ***The Road Back To God*** is designed as an aid to your spiritual journey toward God and a faith that is active in Christian love. This devotional booklet can help you rediscover the source of God's forgiving and renewing power in your life.

Each reading is headlined by a **theme** and a **coordinated Scripture reading.** After each reading, a **summary thought** or **prayer** captures the spirit of the reading. These prayer thoughts often include suggestions for concrete action that can build up your spiritual life.

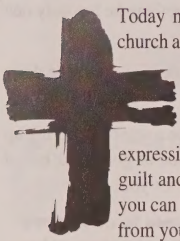
Though these meditations are personal, they can also be used in the company of family. They are intended to supplement attendance at Sunday worship and other special Lenten services.

Strictly speaking, Sundays aren't counted in the forty days of Lent. On Sundays you will likely be attending worship services. In ***The Road Back To God*** Sundays will be used to introduce the next theme, to point the way for your Lenten meditations during the coming six days.

In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. —Ephesians 1:7-8

ASH WEDNESDAY ..... MATTHEW 11:28-30

The Light Burden of Ashes



Today many Christians throughout the world will penitently approach their church altar and receive on their foreheads a cross of ashes. "Dust you are and to dust you will return," the pastor will say—ominous words that remind us that life has its limits and ultimately ends in death.

But the cross of ashes laid upon your forehead is a *light* burden, expressing our Lord's desire to take from your shoulders the *heavy* burdens of guilt and fear. This symbolic act marks the beginning of Lent, a season when you can learn anew the extremes to which God goes to reclaim you and to take from you the *heavy* burden of sin in all its forms.

The true purpose of Lent is not for us to do something to make amends, but to gain in our appreciation of what God has done for us. Christians are not people with a special moral sensitivity or who happen to believe in a book which contains all the answers to life's questions. Rather, we are peculiar people who believe that somehow God is interested in us and that, though we can do nothing to remove the heavy burden of sin from ourselves, we can turn it over to One who wants to take it from us. Thus we accept the *light* burden of ashes, a symbol that we know we have been forgiven.

This Lent, make room in your heart for the love which he has already given. To do that you must first cast out both fear and the love of self that crowds out God's goodness. You must open your heart to believe the good news that God cares for you.

Like many Christians, you have probably asked: What can I give up this Lent? Ask instead: What can God do in me? How can I learn to open myself to God's grace? This Lent, remember that in our relationship with God, receiving is better than giving.

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. —Psalm 121:1

THURSDAY ..... GALATIANS 2:20-21

Giving or Giving Up

People are not Christians because of a particular set of rituals that they follow or because the Ten Commandments play an important part in their lives or even because they are particularly virtuous, committed to doing good for others.

Rather, Christians are those who believe that, for some reason, God has claimed them and redeemed them through the suffering of his Son, that God is present in the activities of their daily lives in order to draw them to him, and that behind a cold and indifferent universe is a waiting Father who wants to welcome them back with open arms. They believe this Father

takes delight when they accept his unconditional love, and is hurt when they reject him.

The essence of Christian teaching, then, is not a set of rules to live by, for all religions have their commandments. **What distinguishes the Christian faith is that it focuses on God and his grace which is given freely, without cost, to those who will accept it. All the pain has been borne by God.** God is so giving that he is willing to give up something he has only one of—his Son.

He gives so that we might give, and by imitation we share with others the kind of love he daily gives to us.

So this Lent, focus on the real meaning of the season. Don't let it just be a season of giving up food, cigarettes, or some fondly cherished excess. Let it not be a season of giving up, but of giving—of sharing in some tangible way the love which God has had for you.

Before this day is over, I will spend time thinking about what I need to do to come closer to God ... to make room in my heart for him and to share with at least one other person the kind of love God has had for me.

FRIDAY ..... MATTHEW 7:24-29

GROWING TOWARD GOD

Many Christians use the forty days of Lent to focus on the story of God's love for human beings revealed in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus—and in the process discover that they also learn more about themselves.

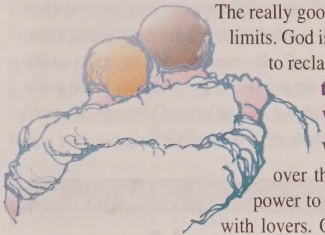
The true journey in life is inward, a process of discovering more about the meaning of life and ourselves each day. We learn in the experience of daily life that focusing on ourselves and taking seriously the pursuit of happiness, in the end, leave only ashes. We learn that the earth is both our exile and our kingdom. The more we learn to love it ... the more the pain when we have to leave it.

In reality, happiness is seen only in the rearview mirror, something that accompanied whatever we were doing or had at a particular time in life. Those who seriously pursue happiness as a goal in life discover that it is always just around the corner, just ahead of them; they are always just a mile away from where they really want to be. What St. Augustine said is really true, "Our hearts will find no rest until they find their rest in God."

So this Lent, try not to focus on yourself and something that you do. Rather, let it be a time of turning around toward God ... a time of rediscovering the great and marvelous things that he has done in your life since he called you by name in baptism to be his own, despite your poverty and littleness. Let this Lent be a time in which you recognize in his face, not the countenance of an angry judge, a maker of rules, but One who was willing to take chances in history to show the extent of his caring for you.

Today I will spend some time thinking about the special opportunities for growth that I have this Lent. Which ones can I really take advantage of?... allot more time for personal devotion and prayer? ... attend an extra church service? ... perhaps, in the name of Christ, visit one person who I know is lonely?

Love—the strongest force on earth



The really good news in the Gospels is that God's love knows no limits. God is extravagant in his love for us, stopping at nothing to reclaim us as his sons and daughters. **But the unconditional love that God has for us also means that we have power over God.**

When someone loves you, you have great power over that person—power to make that person happy or power to make that person sad. That's always the way it is with lovers. One little word, a smile, the smallest of gifts can bring incredible joy. Indifference can bring misery.

Perhaps you can remember when you were a little child how easy it was for you to bring joy (or happy tears) to your parents with a small gift, especially if you made it yourself. Their love for you was so great, they really could not be completely happy without your appreciation and love. The power of love can also be seen in the lives of those who become engaged. The least little gesture that expresses appreciation can bring pleasure to the couple.

And so it is with the love God has for us. He has made himself defenseless. He handed himself over to us, entering human history in order that he might become vulnerable to our acceptance. That is why there is so much joy in heaven over one sinner who repents!

This week I've taken the first steps along the road back to God. It is a long road, but with God's help I will stay on it. I'm glad I started!

See to it that no one misses the grace of God ... —Hebrews 12:15

THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

YOU COUNT IN GOD'S EYES

As children, most of us were taught that to love God, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, was at the heart of Christianity. And this is true! But most of us aren't very good at loving ourselves; some are even afraid of loving themselves. Isn't "selfish" another word for "self-love"? Many of us believe that deep inside we aren't very lovable. How then can we properly love ourselves?

Psychologists tell us that insecurity and fear are what lead people to be selfish and therefore unable to love themselves and be free to care for others.

We need to discover and affirm the proper love of self. The secret is this: The kind of self love that frees us comes from knowing that, even in our sinfulness, God loves and accepts us. We are the recipients of an alien righteousness that makes us precious in God's sight. We count in God's eyes.

As we journey through this first week of Lent, let's look at some of those things that prevent us from properly loving ourselves. We will also discover hidden areas of grace in our lives that will help us to renew our relationship with God, to love and accept ourselves in the right way, and to be free to share that love with others.

> But God has shown us how much he loves us: it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us! By his death we are now put right with God; how much more, then, will we be saved by him from God's wrath. We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life! But that is not all; we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has now made us God's friends. —Romans 5:8-11

MONDAY ..... ROMANS 5:8-11

Worth More Than Gold

What is your "net worth"? *Money* magazine suggests that each family calculate this annually. Wealthier people like to do it more often and most of us will be asked to do it by our bankers when we make application for a loan. In most cases, you discover net worth by subtracting all your liabilities from your assets. What's left is net worth.

But there is an even more serious accounting that must take place in the life of each of us—and it affects the way we feel about ourselves and the way we treat others. In our hearts we all know that our real net worth isn't determined by what we own. In the important areas of life, financial holdings are really beside the point. And, of course, there will come a time when they literally count for nothing. At that time it won't matter whether two plus two equals four.

When all is said and done, what does count are things like faithfulness, integrity, courage and honesty, the ability to believe in something and to have made some contribution to the world and to our own family. This kind of net worth is much more difficult to measure—but so much more important.

Another way of discovering what something is really worth is to test its value in the market place. What is someone willing to pay for it? Something for which a person would give everything must really be worth a lot .... Willing to give everything? Yes, that is what God was willing to do for you. God was willing to give up his only Son so that you might be forgiven and have eternal life, finding joy in a relationship with him and in sharing with others. That's really what the story of Lent is all about. He gave his only Son for you! You must really be worth a lot to him ... and, come to think of it, you must have quite a net worth.

> Lord, let this realization sink in on me this Lent. Anything that can be bought has no real value. Nothing of real value can ever be bought.

TUESDAY ..... COLOSSIANS 3: 12-17

Must We Always Be At War?

Whether we like it or not, we compete with just about every other person in the world. And, as

long as there is plenty to go around, we'll all get along; but when there is a shortage, look out. You wouldn't want to be the last one in line, would you?

Rivalries and the subtle hatreds that they spawn are all around us and at the root of gossip, pettiness, and our lack of ability to get along with each other. They are present in the family when one member wants more recognition than another and in the workaday world in the rush to get the office next to the president.

It takes a radical turnaround to get out of the habit of struggling to be number one. That turnaround can begin when we are able to see the true value in our neighbor—not just the value he or she has in measurable areas of competition—but **the value that clings to every human being because God cares about each of them.** When that true value is seen, that person will no longer be seen just as a competitor, a rival, a person that I must somehow surpass to be number one. Rather, he or she will be seen as a partner, sharing equally the grace and forgiveness of God. We both stand together in the spotlight of God's love. Recognizing that can make any further "competition" healthy.

Lord, today I name in my heart one person that I have always been competing with—and also try to begin to think of that person as an equal sharer with me in your love.

WEDNESDAY ..... TITUS 3:3-8

Why is it hard to love my neighbor?

There is in everyone a potential for hatred that comes from the depths of our being. It is a part of us, deep within us. In the Gulf War some people wanted more bombing to wipe Iraq out. Skin color or handicaps provide an excuse to discriminate against others.

In reality hatred is an outward expression of our own feelings of unworthiness, of an inner loneliness and insufficiency that seeks to excuse itself by lashing out and putting others down. Some people are motivated by these inner feelings of self-hatred and punish themselves, either through depression, or, at times, by striking out at others ... as if tearing someone else down could raise them up, even a little. This kind of self-hatred only feeds upon itself.

To overcome hate—including self-hatred—we need to begin to understand just how "worthy" we are in God's eyes. How is that possible? It takes work.

But look at the history of all the years that have gone before. Are they not a record of God at work on a plan that has resulted in bringing you close to him today ... and forever? The Old Testament is really a record of God's pursuing people who were rebellious, who expressed self-hatred and hatred of others, even hatred of God, in many different ways. God didn't give up. He pursued ... and finally even sent his Son, an only Son, to demonstrate just how seriously he took the task of loving them. That story, of course, does not end with the Biblical records. It continued when God came to you and called you by name in baptism ... and it continues when he offers forgiveness in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

We cannot rid ourselves of feelings of unworthiness as easily as we toss off old clothes. We cannot disguise these feelings for long, either. But they need no longer be a source of despair or hatred when we begin to realize the mercy of God. That is what the story of Lent is all about.

THURSDAY ..... ROMANS 12:9-21

Faith Active in Love

One cannot be truly satisfied with a faith that does not become active in works of love, for works of love are the witness, the evidence that faith is really alive.

Faith is not the belief that certain propositions about God are correct or sufficient. Faith is acceptance that God is both forgiving and reliable. This acceptance opens up a new understanding about life, one that affirms that it is better to give than to receive.

Some people do good things to advance themselves or to be polite. Some good works stem from the desire to look good in others' eyes. These good works are part of a hidden pattern in our lives that implies that if we do something good or right, we will ultimately be rewarded.

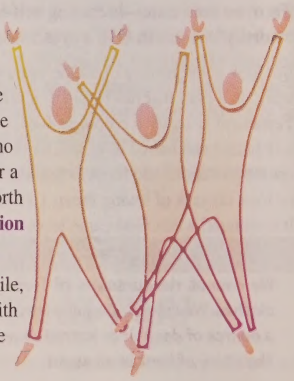
True good works stem not from the profit motive but from the realization that we are the undeserved recipients of the good work of God. Because we are first cared for and forgiven, we want to care for others.

Only those who truly realize their own poverty and spiritual weakness are capable of genuine love. It has always been that way with the saints. One theologian put it this way, "The saints are those who made it a little bit easier to believe in God." Instead of asking "What's in it for me?" they discovered a freedom to give freely to others ... and in that way they became windows through which we could see God.

Today I will thank God for his special gifts to me—gifts that open my heart to receive his love, gifts like the Eucharist and worship with other Christians, gifts which help to free me to love others.

FRIDAY ..... ROMANS 8:31-39

Give Thanks for Who You Are



"It is by grace that you are saved. It is a gift of God, not of works," St. Paul said many years ago. That's really worth shouting about! Imagine, you are saved, you are thought to be worth something by God! You are not like the old shoe to be thrown away when worn out, not like yesterday's newspaper, useful for a while but now of no use, not like last year's Christmas toy, bringing joy for a short period of time only to be forgotten. You are worth keeping. **You are God's work of art and the expression of his care for the world through the things you do.**

Imagine that! God gets his work done through your smile, your concern for the disenfranchised, your sharing with those who need help in every describable way. You are the one who cares for them because God cares for

them. Your eyes are his eyes. Your hands are his hands.

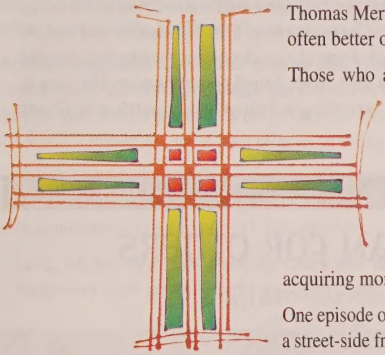
With little or no value in and of ourselves, we are worth God's all. He does not love us because we are good, but we become good when and because he loves us. If we open our hearts to that love, our love of others will, with God's help, take care of itself. We can't help but respond to his love by imitation.

If we recognize the gift of God's love and that we are worth something in his eyes, then we are free to discover who we really are.

Your loving kindness is greater than the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. —Psalm 108:4

SATURDAY ..... MATTHEW 16:25-26

Bad Successes and Good Failures



Thomas Merton has said, "The person who fails well is often better off than one who succeeds badly."

Those who accept their limitations, and the fact that they will likely miss out on a few things in life, are far better off than those who have a lot and fret over not having even more. When you worry about the things you don't have, you steal from yourself, robbing yourself of peace of mind as well as true happiness. And your success in acquiring more, in the end, leaves you with less.

One episode of the old TV show *Candid Camera* depicted a street-side fruit stand of cantaloupes. Over the stand was a sign, "Free—Help Yourself." One person after another eagerly plucked the melons from the stand, piling them up in their arms ... always reaching for just one more ... until all the melons spilled from their arms and broke on the sidewalk. Here was a real case of "less is more."

Those who recognize their own limitations and set their sights on realistic goals have a good chance of succeeding in using their abilities to the fullest. And though they may fail to achieve the success of some others, they will learn some of the more important and profound lessons in life—and in the quiet of their own souls they will hear the voice of the Spirit saying, "You do count for something; blessed are the poor in spirit."

They will discover one of the great secrets of satisfaction in life, namely that **the best things in life aren't things.**

On this Saturday, my journey through Lent is more than one week along. Encourage me, Lord, to continue along the path that brings me closer to you. Help me to guard against that special sin in my life that threatens my relationship with you.

THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT
The Meaning of Grace in Our Lives

A gift is something valuable voluntarily transferred to another without compensation. In reality, gifting is contrary to human nature. Most people would rather get than give. Humankind's deep-seated suspicion about gifts was long ago described in the Greek myth of Prometheus, the god who was tortured for stealing fire and giving it to human beings. Today, we also suspect anything "free" because there is usually a gimmick. "There is no such thing as a free lunch," the saying goes.

Yet giving and receiving are at the heart of Christianity. God's giving and our receiving. Our giving and God's receiving. But who could seriously think of giving God anything?

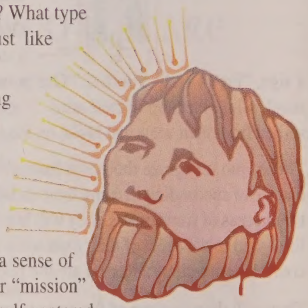
In praying with **The Road Back To God** this Lent, we seek this week to enhance our appreciation of the meaning of God's grace in our lives, an insight that will free us to give to God as well as to others.

> For by the death of Christ we are set free, and our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, which he gave to us in such large measure! In all his wisdom and insight God did what he had purposed, and made known to us the secret plan he had decided to complete by means of Christ. God's plan, which he will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as Head. —Ephesians 1:7-10

MONDAY ..... JOHN 10:11-18

Christ, a Man for Others

What was the personality of Jesus Christ really like? What type of a guy was he really? He might have been just like someone you know today.



As you read what the Bible says about Jesus, one thing you notice about him is that his whole life was driven by a sense of mission. He was truly a man in a hurry. He had so many things to do and sensed there was too little time. The Scripture tells us very little about Jesus "taking it easy."

Perhaps you do know some busy people today with a sense of "mission." Yet there is quite a difference in that their "mission" usually means rushing to complete tasks that are self-centered. Their sense of urgency stems from the fact that they are in competition with someone else.

The Scripture also tells us that Jesus could be confrontational, yet without being competitive. He spoke the truth, unvarnished by public relations skills. You may also know someone like that today. But notice that with Jesus there was a difference. He was never confrontational in

his own interest but always in the service of speaking the truth and helping others. **His passion was not for himself but for spending himself in the service of others.**

When you meet people like that, you never forget them.

The central message of Lent is that God cared enough to send the very best—his Son! What a gift that was! This week I will seek to share that good news with someone else.

TUESDAY ..... GALATIANS 5:22-26

Happiness is Free

There are many different ways of being happy and many different ways of achieving happiness.

It's probably fair to say that, for most people, "achieving happiness" is one of the central goals in life. Oh, they may not want it *all*, but they do want their *share* of happiness.

Are you like that? Do you create for yourself illusions and improbable goals ... seeking after what the world calls "happiness"—as seen on TV and in the magazines?

Actually happiness always comes as an afterthought—alongside of whatever you might be doing and whatever you might have. It comes as one of God's free gifts, given only in the quiet of your heart. Happiness is never very far from peace. True happiness doesn't conform to the world's standards, and it isn't effervescent like the laugh tracks on TV's sitcoms.

Rather, it is the quiet inner conviction that God knows you by name, that somehow you count for something, and that you are part of God's plan for the world. You believe that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

Lord, let me this Lent open my heart and receive and cherish the secret gift of happiness that can only come as I draw closer to you.

WEDNESDAY ..... MATTHEW 6:25-30

What You Really Need Can't Be Bought

There is a remarkable story in the Old Testament about a king who had a dread disease. He had tried everything to achieve a cure; nothing worked. He was getting worse. Wanting desperately to be cured, he went to a prophet of God and was told that he would be cured by washing in a certain river at a certain time. You'd think he would be overjoyed at this good news, but he wasn't. He was disappointed and suspicious; he didn't want to do it. How could something so good be free?

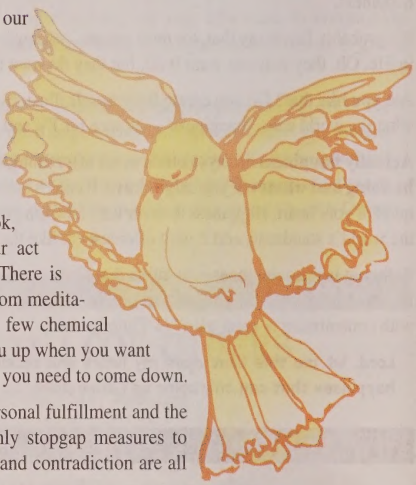
What was true for that king is true for you and me. **The things we truly need are all free.** The things we really need—to love and to be loved, to have a sense of our own identity and destiny,

to believe that God has a plan for our life—are never bought and can never be achieved by straining after them. There is really nothing we can do to obtain them, no drug, no insured savings account, no special counseling ... nothing will bring them to us—except the opening of our hearts and by faith the receiving of them as a gift. The gift of contentment comes as God's benediction on all who are close to him.

We are truly rich when we are satisfied. We are poor when we constantly feel that we need more. Lord, open my heart to the gift of faith that trusts you and brings contentment; it alone can make me truly rich.

THURSDAY ..... ROMANS 14:19

The Gift of Peace



One of the things most sought after in our world today is peace. For the Israelis and Arabs, the Iraqis and Kuwaitis or for the Haitians, it is sought after by political means. We also want peace in our personal lives. People want it desperately. And so, not a day goes by without at least one of the TV talk shows hawking a new "how-to" book, designed to enable you to "get your act together" or "to find where it's at." There is always some new self-help strategy from meditation to aroma therapy, with perhaps a few chemical boosters added on the side to bring you up when you want to get up and to bring you down when you need to come down.

But at best, both the new ideas for personal fulfillment and the commercials for sleeping aids are only stopgap measures to create a temporary amnesia. Conflict and contradiction are all around us.

The true search is really not just for peace but for "the peace that passes all human understanding."

That peace comes to us not as the result of hard work, but, strangely, as the free gift to those who come close to God in prayer and worship, those who recognize that seeking the welfare of others will require sacrifice, clearheaded honesty, openness, humility, and a readiness to ask forgiveness and to forgive.

The peace that "passes all human understanding" will only stay with us when we return daily to the well of God's mercy.

Reflect prayerfully on the news that you heard today. Is there any way in which you can be an agent to bring peace? Can you be a peacemaker in your own family or neighborhood?

FRIDAY ..... I JOHN 4:7-11

OVERCOMING HATE WITH LOVE

"Tit for tat" is the way some say it. "An eye for an eye" is the way the Old Testament said it. A modern comedian goes it one better when he says, "Do it before it's done to you."

That's how the law of retribution works, both between countries and between people. Somehow this approach almost seems necessary—with evil on such a rampage, the only way to stop it is with force. But think of it: "An eye for an eye." That just means that there would be two fewer eyes. The "tit for tat" approach escalates violence, as violence begets violence and puts people at each other's throats. It leads to war. It takes a lot of prayer and practice to begin to overcome the tendency to fight evil with evil.

A beginning for overcoming this cycle can be made when we see ourselves as we really are rather than how we imagine ourselves to be—measuring ourselves by God's yardstick more than by our own. If things are to be "evened up" with God, he would be entitled to exact a price from us for each and every sin.

God does not want war with us. He shows the better way. In the face of our rebellion, he took the first step toward us in love. From crib to cross, Christ's life of loving service set in motion a force that makes it possible for us to return love for evil. This grace is not easily found. It is difficult to love freely when the other person isn't lovable. But loving acceptance is the only way to bring peace in your heart—or in the world.

In a quiet moment of thought, think of someone you have hurt by your prejudice. Try to move beyond prejudice; remember that the love of God extends to that person, too. Pray for that person by name.

SATURDAY ..... LUKE 15:11-24

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

What do you think it was that finally brought the Prodigal Son to say—after squandering his nest egg on a macho pursuit of fun—"I'll go home"?

It can be said with some truth that he had nothing to lose. There was really no way to go but up. But was that really true? A return could just as possibly have added ridicule and rejection to his already considerable pain. At home he would hear, "I told you so."

Yet there was a force strong enough to urge him to go back, a longing that pulled him up out of the pit. In his heart, far back, was the memory of his father and the knowledge that beyond everything that he might deserve, there was a place where he still belonged.

This story of the Prodigal Son is really a story that fits all of us. It is a symbol for all who have "done their own thing" and wandered from home, far from God.

Home is a place, but it is always more than a place. The Prodigal Son was able to see more clearly from afar what he always knew, but had forgotten—that there was a place where he really belonged.

Robert Frost says somewhat comically, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to let you in." That's the way it is with our heavenly Father.

There is no promise of greater importance in your life than that which tells you there is a place where you are awaited, a place at the table reserved for you, no matter what you have done. And at that place is a waiting Father whose heart aches across the miles for every son or daughter who has gone astray. He puts a candle in the window saying, "Welcome home!"

Lord, this day I will thank you for the places that I call home ... all of them just a down payment on the home where I will live with you forever. What grace!

THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE FAITH?

If our Lenten study is to lead us back to God, our faith must also be renewed. We must be willing to set aside our pet sins and open our heart through prayer. We must work to set aside our doubt and cynicism and say, "Lord, may your will be done in my life."

It will help to have a proper understanding of just what faith is. We may think what we are seeking is genuine faith, even when it is not.

The bottom line is that faith is a mystery; no one can tell exactly why they believe. And yet, as great as that mystery is, there are some sure ways to help your faith grow. Our journey this Lent will help us to discover those sources of power.

MONDAY ..... MATTHEW 15:22-28

BELIEVING OR BELIEVING IN ...

Some people think that the heart of Christian faith is believing certain doctrines about God. And so they seek to learn more about orthodox doctrines, religion and God. This kind of "believing" often doesn't hold up when the journey of life goes uphill. And it's the kind of faith that is rarely, if ever, talked about in the Bible. Knowing facts about God isn't the same as knowing God and it doesn't answer the riddle of life. Nor does it empower us to overcome the selfishness and fear which destroy our happiness. What is it the Scripture says? "Even the devils believe and tremble" (James 2:19).

A living faith must be more than just beliefs about something; it must lead us to trust somebody.

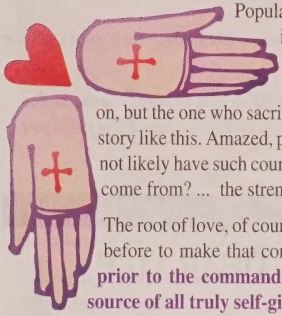
Notice that the Syro-phoenician woman in the Bible reading suggested for today had that kind of faith. The heart of her belief was that God could be trusted. She believed in the goodness of Jesus and was sure that there was a place in his heart for her. That was why she could be so persistent in asking for his help. She trusted the promise that God is both faithful and compassionate—and would always be there for her in time of need.

Notice how the record of Jesus' life and teaching reveals this, too. God is coming to us, entering into our history, making the ultimate sacrifice so that we might believe.

Some call ours an age of skepticism. But our time may be more accurately described as one of blind faith in every passing whim. Some people have a lot of "faith"—but in the wrong things. Listen again to the story of Christ's passion this Lent. Is there something, or better said, Someone, here for you to believe in?

TUESDAY ..... JOHN 15:9-13

Faith, the Root of Love



Popular novels often describe for us situations where people are in a desperate fix, so desperate that the survival of one person requires the loss of the life of another. The real hero in a story like this is, of course, not the one who lives on, but the one who sacrifices so that another may live. We are always amazed at a story like this. Amazed, probably, because we think in our own heart that we would not likely have such courage or such love. Where does the strength to love like that come from? ... the strength love enough to give everything for someone else?

The root of love, of course, is not the commandment to love, but what must come before to make that commandment bearable and understandable. **Love that is prior to the commandment, and the grace to believe in that love, are the source of all truly self-giving acts.** The root of all self-giving love is found in the prior belief that one is loved. Look at the way it is with lovers—their blind willingness to accept one another as they are and even to count it as joy.

The belief that one is loved by God in spite of all contradictions allows a Christian's faith to become active in love. Knowing that they are accepted by God frees people to give and by imitation to reflect the love God has for them. They can be helpers—not only in ultimate life and death situations, but in everyday life and in the care of the poor and disenfranchised.

Feelings of unworthiness are part of human life. Raging against those feelings only gives false relief. When we seek genuine relief through faith in God, then we can begin to sort out the various hatreds that creep into our lives and prevent us from caring for others. In a very practical sense, let this Lenten period be one in which you take that first step forward to help at least one other person.

WEDNESDAY ..... MARK 4:35-41

Faith on Trial

James Carroll in "A Terrible Beauty" tells a fascinating little story of the time when he discovered that his faith was alive. He says that it happened one day in Cleveland when "what little I know of death and resurrection I learned from the now defunct Eastern Airlines.

"It was a moment of dread ... whether we were seasoned travelers or not. The moment when the captain's voice said, cool, detached, distant as death, 'Emergency ... mechanical difficulty ... prepare ... be calm.'

"I was terrified. We had twenty minutes ... to watch the stewardess run through the drill again, to fold the pillow in our laps, to wait for—as they called it—impact. Twenty minutes in which to remember how to pray. Twenty minutes to live. Twenty minutes to die.

"What matters to me about Cleveland and those twenty minutes, twelve, seven, three, wheels down, impact, is that I died, no matter what the paper said. By the time that plane came to a stop at the terminal I was gone.

"I was gone, and I came back. Resurrection took my flesh. Resurrection is what happens when we survive what we had no right to.

"If there is a promise in Cleveland, it is that I, who died, live."

Many times God tests our faith just so that we might know it's strong. He knows it all the time, but the test comes so that we might know.

Lord, today I will call to mind two occasions when my faith was tested. Thank you for bringing me through those times—and letting me see just how strong the faith you have given me really is.

THURSDAY ..... HEBREWS 11:1-6

God Holds on for Dear Life

Faith is a key term in trying to understand what it means to be a Christian. Christians will have faith in God, but also in a lot of other things. When we fly, we have faith in the pilot, the plane, the laws of aerodynamics. When the doctor tells us, "It's not serious," we believe. Years ago the New York Mets, a then undistinguished team, fought their way to the pennant with the theme, "You gotta believe." And, you do! Life is not possible without faith. All people believe—even an atheist who bets all his chips on his belief that there is no God.

But Christian faith isn't like any of these. Faith begins with the understanding that somehow it is important to you and to God that you know each other. He cares. You care. Through all of the stories in the Bible runs the thread of this struggle to care. Christian faith reaches both backward and forward and is an affirmation that because God cares about you, your life transcends time.

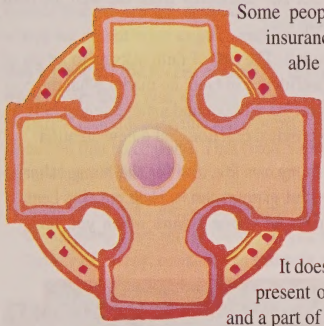
There is a mystery here. For though it is possible, in some ways, to describe faith, no human being can tell you why he or she believes nor is it possible to predict just how far this faith will carry one into the future.

Faith needs to be nurtured. There are time-tested ways guaranteed to strengthen faith, even if we do not understand the process. Faith seems to grow in the presence of other Christians. God's caring is present and faith is strengthened in the life of the Church: in worship, in prayer and in the Lord's Supper.

Lord, today I am confronted with the ultimate mystery of my life. Why have you cared enough about me to claim me as your own and to place into my heart the precious gift of faith? Receive my gratitude this moment. I will take comfort that your grasp of me is sure, even when my hold on you isn't.

FRIDAY ..... JOHN 17:1-3

Faith is a Bridge



Some people see their Christian faith as a kind of "Jesus insurance." When their last hour comes, they want to be able to hold on to something, and to be able to call out the name of the Lord and believe that someone hears. They see faith as something that is really meant for the end time. They believe so that when they die, they go to heaven.

But this kind of faith is lukewarm and helps neither in life nor in death.

It does not help with respect to death, because death is not present only when one stops breathing. Death is pervasive and a part of everything we do. Death is brutally present, hiding even in every joy ... for we know even the greatest earthly joy will not last. Death is present in the ticking of our clocks. Our life is running toward its end.

Neither is a shallow faith helpful in life: You will never have enough of it to make a real difference in your life.

Christians believe in eternal life, not just a life beyond the grave. It doesn't take a lot of thinking to see that if one really believes in eternal life, it has already begun. It is not just something that happens in the future. Once we are linked with God, that relationship lasts forever.

In the best sense, faith is the bridge that brings life and death together in a new creation. It provides new eyes with which to perceive the reality that God is present in the life of all believers ... that he is there to no greater degree in death than he is in life.

Lord, today I want to reassess my view of eternal life. Help me to expand it so that it is much more than just a reward for those who believe. Rather, let me see it as the undeserved grace that surrounds me even now and is so great that it will last forever.

SATURDAY ..... PSALM 37:3-7

A Faith That Will Not Fail

Faith today has become cheap. We squander it by trusting in such things as the right kind of car, the right kind of government program, the right kind of household product, deodorant, or toothpaste. In reality, this cheap faith is not faith at all. It is built upon cumulative experience, and it is fickle. **Christian faith is different. It is extreme and radical.**

The story is told of a man who once fell into a well but stopped his long fall into the abyss by hanging on to a slender rope, on which a rat was already gnawing. In his desperation, the man

called out, "Is there anyone up there who can help me?" No answer. He called again, "Is there anyone up there who can help me?" as he slipped another few feet down into the well and the frayed rope threatened to give way. "Is there anyone up there who can help me?" "Yes," a voice replied. "Who are you?" the man in the well asked. "This is God speaking," the voice said. "Help! What should I do?" the man asked. "Let go." Suddenly from the well the man cried out, "Is there *anyone else* up there who can help me?"

The faith of the man in the well was not radical enough. The call of faith asks us to let go of everything that is contrary to a complete trust and confidence in God, no matter what the cost or the risk. It urges us to abandon our whole life to his care without understanding just how he intends to care for us. It is not a subjective or psychological reaction, but a new creation.

Lord, today I thank you for the miracle of faith in my own life, and for the many other elements of grace that are present to sustain and strengthen it. Help me this Lent to follow through and to continue to participate in those things which you have promised will be an aid to my faith.

THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT
REDISCOVERING HOPE

Our Christian journey will not be completed until we have journeyed all the way through life to eternal life with the God who caused us to come into being.

For our journey on earth, we must not expect too much sweetness and light. We travel in hope which inevitably is ambiguous. Hope holds before us the promise of God's riches, but it does not spare us experiences of pain, separation, and uncertainty.

But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and make him your Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you. —I Peter 3:15

MONDAY ..... COLOSSIANS 1:9-20

THERE IS A FIXED POINT IN A TURNING WORLD

Take a few minutes and through the window of your imagination look at the past years of your life. Isn't it remarkable how these years run together, a blur of seasons and times? In the rear-view mirror life somehow seems so much easier and less complicated—probably less so than it really was!

Certainly the past appears less complicated than the years of change that lie ahead. A quiet dread grows in us when we think about the future, because the future will bring about so many changes over which we have no control. Change is the one thing that is certain about the future. It will be different from the present. We will have to move on from where we are now and leave our comfortable niches. The fortunes of those who were "number one" are brought low;

riches take wing and fly away. Friends become enemies, and enemies become friends. Our view of life's needs and what is really valuable matures and changes.

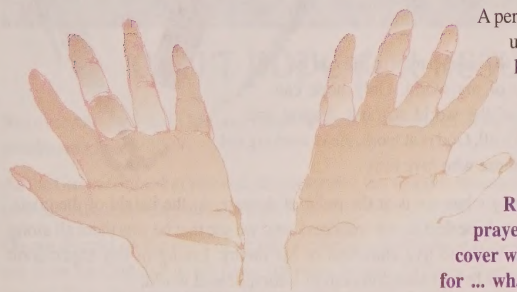
Everything on earth changes: winter, spring, summer, fall, each in its own turn. It is, of course, the factor of change that alarms us when we think about the future. A future moving toward us signals that we are not in control of our lives, and this is terrifying. The future may take us where we do not want to go ... and it surely leads to the end of the road.

But among all the forces of change, there is a fixed point, a center spot on which to stand when everything else around changes. That fixed point is the person of Jesus Christ. You were first introduced to that fixed point at the time of your baptism. The beacon of God's Word shines on that fixed point. That fixed point is the source of the hope that helps you through all the changes of life.

Stop to think ... since your baptism, the Lord has brought you a long way ... many times along dark paths. And yet, you are here today—still safe in him. Father of mercy, continue to sustain our hope in you.

TUESDAY ..... ROMANS 8:26-27

FROM PRAYER ... COMES HOPE



A person who prays often opens up his vision and discovers hope through new perspectives. In prayer, we don't really seek to tell God what we want. He already knows that!

Rather, the purpose of prayer is to enable us to discover what we are really hoping for ... what we really want. Have you ever heard of someone praying, "Lord, let Tom fall on his face this time," or "I hope Betty's reception is really a flop"? Prayer is a necessary nourishment of our hope for good things.

Prayer replenishes and clarifies our lives as it helps us to believe, to seek forgiveness as well as to forgive, and to offer an alien blessing that comes from God at our request for others, both the lovable and the not-so-lovable.

Prayer is not a pious addition to the real world where the game is usually won by the team with the best players and not the best pray-ers. It is the way God uses to open the future for us, to bring about things that would otherwise not have happened. Jesus could not have gone to the cross unless he had first prayed in Gethsemane.

Lord, fill my heart with wisdom to ask for those things which I need much more often than I ask for those things which I want. Above all, lead me to pray this prayer often:"Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

WEDNESDAY ..... I PETER 1:3-9

Hope is Better Than Courage

Hope is better than courage when facing the future. It takes more than courage, more than a "stiff upper lip" to begin to walk down a road that may lead to the far end of nothing. We cannot break the plane of tomorrow and see what the future will bring ... but with hope, we can go there with anticipation.

In the face of life's ambiguities, injustice, war, division, greed, jealousy and innocent suffering, existentialist author Albert Camus maintained that the only important philosophical question is whether or not to commit suicide. How does one face the future with hope in a world that seems to be going mad?

It takes more than courage to find meaning in life and to see beyond the absurdity of the world. Only hope can confront the absurdities of the world without despair and believe that in the midst of it all, God is at work. He is working out all things for the good of those who love him.

God provides hope precisely when we is at the point of despair. At the height of the crisis, God's power is suddenly made perfect in our weakness, and we see that he was there all along with his loving work. We begin to live confident of his mercy. Living in this expectation means to live in hope without fear of abandonment in a complicated world.

Lord, I have often begged for courage. Was I praying for courage to make myself look good? Help me to trust that no problem in this world is too big for you.

THURSDAY ..... PSALM 62:5-8

Hope and Expectation

Hope and expectation always go hand in hand. That is precisely the reason so many people in our world today have little genuine hope. They feed on short-term expectation, fueled by the desire to experience and to possess.

They look forward to all sorts of things, but their expectations are misplaced and ultimately disappointed because they have been focused only on obtaining things, a kaleidoscope of new

thrills to dress up life and feed their appetites. These thrills fade away, and rather quickly, leaving only a thirst for newer and bigger things lest life become dull and hopeless.

This problem often afflicts those who have too much as well as those who have too little. Their days stretch out empty and long ... and they reach for the chemical highs of liquor and drugs to help it all make sense.

St. Paul showed us the right way when he prayed for God's presence in his life both when he had too much and when he had too little.

Christian hope is born of a different kind of expectation, an expectation that looks for the footprints of God along the path of life. Such hope seeks an answer to the mystery of what God has in store. It is a daily process of examining the story of one's own life—each day a new page, with its own suffering and joy ... all a part of God's unfolding plan to treat us well and reclaim us. Christian hope restores values by setting all the issues of life in the right perspective.

Hope is always found along the road of the Christian journey because the One who embodies hope and expectation is right beside us.

Hope is an intensely personal virtue; no one else can long sustain hope for us. But the Church helps by hoping with us, if we participate in the fellowship of the saints.

FRIDAY ..... ROMANS 8:24-25

Don't hope for results

Not everything we do in life is of equal value, and sometimes in the more important things, the results are unseen.

As the *Guinness Book of Records* demonstrates, the world is obsessed with measurable results, new records, and being number one.

Do not depend on the hope of results in everything you do in life—especially the things that are done for God and in his name for other people. In many cases, you will see few, if any, results. There are some things that are worthwhile just in the doing.

Do not hope for results, but rather concentrate on the value, the rightness of what you are doing.

The good we do is often not fully the result of our efforts anyway. Things suddenly happen and we find great joy in sharing the results. At best those results come about because we allowed God to work through us.

Think of what you do for God in this way and you will be free from the need always to see measurable results. You will be more open to God's grace.

The real hope, then, lies in our trust that God will accomplish something through us.

Today I will forgive myself for not being perfect and ask the Lord to forgive me, too. I will ask him to help me to pay more attention to those things that are really worthwhile in my life, despite the sometimes invisible results.

Hope and Patience Go Together

Just because we want hope doesn't mean that we can experience it whenever we choose. We must wait for it to be given to us. That is why patience and hope always go together.

Those in the world who make things happen, the so-called "movers and shakers," may not experience genuine hope because they tend to believe that they can shape the world by the force of their effort and ability alone.

Hope comes to those with empty hearts and empty hands, those who wait to be filled by the grace of God. That emptiness, that patience, that waiting, all leave room for hope. When hope fills our hearts, it crowds out all those things that would deprive us of God.

Hope comes to those who never give up and is reserved for those who are poor in spirit.

Patience is good preparation for the revelation of some new way through which God is planning to grace us and fill us with hope.

Stop to think ... How many times has God had good things on the way for you, but the new day hadn't dawned yet. All you had was hope ... and God came through! Father of mercy, continue to sustain my hope in you!

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
The Mystery of Christian Suffering

One can find God only by looking at the cross. Only in suffering is the full extent of God's redemptive love made known. Lent is an ideal time to meditate on the riddle of life and the mystery and majesty of Christian suffering. Though our path of life runs uphill, there is One who has first experienced all the trials that may come our way.

He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity .... Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. —Isaiah 53:3-4

MONDAY ..... ROMANS 8:28

WHEN NOTHING SEEMS TO MAKE SENSE

Each of us must learn to accept the fact that not everything in life makes sense. We will never know the "why" of everything that happens.

If we knew, there would be no room for faith—and joy! It is precisely because we are at risk that events in life have a much more profound meaning than is at first evident. They invite us to believe that behind everything that passes our way is the watchful eye of a heavenly Father. **The unknown in the events of our lives is an invitation to trust him rather than to obtain favors from his hand.**

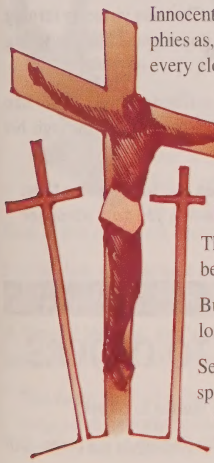
It is the unexplainable about the future that makes our commitments meaningful. In the marriage vow we make a commitment "in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer." It is the unknown dimensions of that journey and all its accidents along the way that make that commitment significant and worthwhile.

Some people see an unknown future as a reason for fear and anxiety. Don't let it be so for you. Your life doesn't have to be secure at every moment. Trust God for that future.

How often do we complain that if we just understood why this or that was happening, we could accept it? The next time you are tempted to grumble, remember that at that very moment, God is at work to bring you a benediction in this difficult situation.

TUESDAY ..... HEBREWS 12:1-6

THE GIFT OF SUFFERING



Innocent suffering is rarely explained away by such trite worldly philosophies as, "Into every life some rain must fall," or "There is a silver lining in every cloud." Nor is it of much comfort to say that in reality suffering is universal.

For the Christian, suffering becomes bearable when it is recognized that it does not enter life because of bad luck or blind fate, but as a sacramental gift of God whose purpose is to make a pathway for his grace.

The dread fact of suffering is evidence of the wrenching separation between the world and all people from God, which is a result of sin.

But even here God can use this avenue as a way of reclaiming the lost.

Seen in this way, one can accept suffering as a part of his or her own special identity given by God ... evidence that God is at work seeking to reclaim you as his own. The Christian bears suffering knowing that even this difficulty will never outdistance God's grace.

Christian suffering is a participation in the sufferings of Christ, opening up the world to redemption. Those who share with Christ his wounds will also find his peace. He followed the way to the cross so that we might never have to suffer without hope.

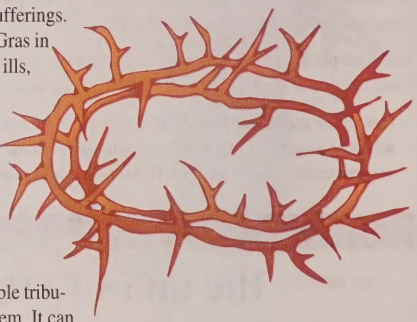
In my baptism, Lord, you called me by name to do tasks which no one else can. Give me the grace to do them with joy and not complain when the path leads uphill.

"Christ suffered, not that we might never have to suffer, but that all our sufferings might be like his." —George McDonald

WEDNESDAY ..... ISAIAH 53:1-7

SUFFERING AND SILENCE

Some people like to talk about their sufferings. Conversing with them is like a Mardi Gras in reverse—as they list their complaints, ills, and woes.



The Christian, like Christ, must sometimes bear suffering in silence. As the greatest drama in all history unfolded, Christ went forth without complaint, adding dignity to his love-to-the-death for the sake of all people.

Constantly talking about the unavoidable tribulations or ills in our lives trivializes them. It can rob them of the opportunity they have to provide us with growth in Christian virtue by turning them into opportunities for gaining attention and self-pity. In this way we take from suffering the hidden blessing it seeks to give us.

The Scripture reading for today shows us the example of Isaiah's suffering servant, who, like Christ, accepted God's will in silence and in so doing received a benediction through his sorrow.

Can you think of a time when something bad in your life turned out to be better than you thought? God was at work, staying close by you and leading you to a stronger faith. His blessing was in disguise.

THURSDAY ..... HEBREWS 4:14-16

WHEN I BECOME A BURDEN TO OTHERS

We must accept the very difficult truth that at times we become a burden to others.

If we live long enough, it will surely happen as a natural thing, as the journey of life comes full

circle. Those many ways in which we have cared for ourselves will have to be done for us by others. Accident or illness can also bring this upon those who do not reach "the long shadows of the day."

We need a special measure of God's grace to accept our weakness. In one sense, in our spiritual life it has been this way all along. God's never-ending care, new each day, has nursed us who were unable to help ourselves and has made it possible for us to continue to believe despite the messiness of our lives.

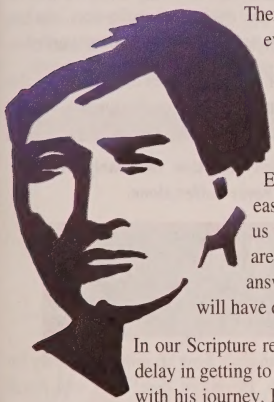
It takes tremendous courage and humility to let others minister to us when we have absolutely no way to care for ourselves. We become like those who are rich, because they are poor in spirit.

Thomas Merton tells us, "We can't suffer well unless we see Christ everywhere—both in our suffering and in the charity of those who aid in our affliction."

Lord, thank you for all those who are ministers of care for others. Give me the faith and wisdom to be at peace receiving help when I truly need it.

FRIDAY ..... GENESIS 32:23-32

The Limp of Blessing



There is nothing in life so good that it does not contain some evil and nothing so bad that it does not contain some good. This ambiguity is what makes choices in life so difficult. It also makes our choices significant because in each case we have an opportunity to respond by searching for God's will or by seeking our own self-interest.

Every decision brings with it the opportunity to look for the easiest way. Temptation enters in and deceives us by leading us to choose things that appear to be better than they really are. We are sometimes persuaded by the need for an easy answer or instant gratification ... and we do something that will have dire consequences in the long run.

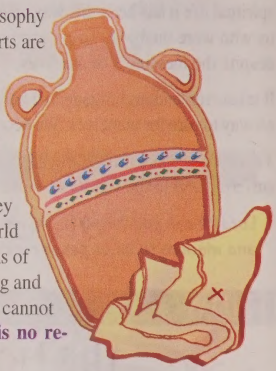
In our Scripture reading for today, Jacob saw his encounter with God as a delay in getting to his destination. His first choice might have been to get on with his journey. But he decided to stay. He left with a limp—but meeting God in this encounter changed his name and his life forever.

For us, too, our darkest moments can be occasions when God is drawing near to us and seeking to give us a blessing.

A limp of blessing, that's what Jacob had. The Christian bears the marks of suffering not as unhealed wounds but as the reminder of the struggle out of which faith is born.

The basic task of a Christian is not so much to accept suffering as it is to make it holy. Lord, help me to consecrate pain through prayer. When next I am called upon to suffer, I will remember and find comfort in the sufferings of Christ.

AN INNER PEACE



A Christian needs more than just a good working philosophy about suffering. The paperback book stands in our airports are stuffed with the latest pop philosophies designed to help people "stop worrying and start living." But this kind of philosophy will never be sufficient to deal with our problems because it can never explain the "why" of suffering.

Christians don't try to just explain away suffering. They recognize that there can be no redemption in the world without it. This is true with respect to the social problems of the 1990s. Racism will not be overcome without suffering and sacrifice on the part of those who lead the way. Poverty cannot be overcome without a commitment to share. **There is no redemption without suffering.**

If the world was to return to God, nothing less than sacrifice, than suffering, even the loss of the life of God's only Son could have accomplished that. The Christian believes that sin has separated people from God and that the relationship can only be restored at a tremendous cost.

Suffering becomes bearable when we can see a reason for it. It takes eyes of faith to see the humble gifts available only to the poor and the suffering and to recognize the unseen Partner who is beside all those who suffer.

Lord, restore in me a deep appreciation of the rich Christian fellowship of the communion of saints. Because of that community, I never suffer alone.

THE SIXTH WEEK OF LENT

holy week

Holy Week brings the culmination of Christ's great redemptive work. It ends gloriously on Easter, when we hear those Gospel words, "He is risen. He is not here!" We can never celebrate the Lord's resurrection too much, but we can forget the full meaning it has for our lives and the way it can revolutionize all our thoughts and actions. His resurrection isn't complete until we also have risen to a new life, until it can be said of us: "They are risen. They are not here!" Then we will have arrived at the end of our journey in triumph.

From that time on Jesus began to say plainly to his disciples: "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, and on the third day I will be raised to life." —Matthew 16:21

MONDAY ..... ROMANS 6:1-11

EASTER IS MORE THAN A MEMORIAL

For some Christians, the great events of their faith have become too symbolic and have thus lost a great deal of their meaning. Celebrations of Easter, Christmas, the other great events of the Christian calendar have become so mixed with social customs—the rites of passage of spring and the festival of gift-giving at Christmas—that they have lost a great deal of their Christian content.

God wants from us more than just recognition of these as great holy days. He seeks more than just applause over the past. **Rather, he wants them to be avenues of grace through which he enters our lives to change them completely.**

Holy Week is not a time when we merely reaffirm our belief in the great acts of God, the giving of himself in the Holy Supper, the sacrifice unto death of Good Friday, and the resurrection hope of Easter.

God seeks through the mystery of the re-enactment of this drama to offer us power for new living itself. These stories not only jog our memory about history, but are the power of God to create faith.

Lord, how often have I let the Easter season pass as liturgical spectacle, without being drawn into the personal challenge it presents? Help me this Holy Week to discover anew the real meaning of these events for my life.

TUESDAY ..... PSALM 90

NEW AGAIN

The psalmist reminds us that the days of our lives are like the shifting sands of the hourglass. He urges us to reflect on that reality.

This can be a rewarding task during this final week of Lent ... for we are nearer Calvary now than when we first started our Lenten journey.

Use the few moments of this meditation to look back at the past years of your life. **Are you carrying baggage that you no longer want to take with you into the future?** Ask yourself honestly and try to be specific.

Are there pet sins that need to be confessed, forgiven?

Are there people who need to be embraced again, to whom I owe a word of forgiveness? Why not do it now?

Are there personal habits which are harmful to me? Why not have a change of heart now?

Life will never be as joyful as it might be as long as the wolves of the past howl in the cellars of our souls.

Don't expect all your problems to vanish at once. Renewal is a process that takes time and continuing effort.

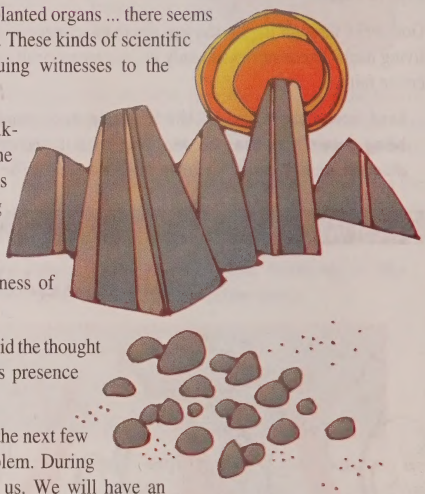
As we walk down the road to Calvary this Lent, let's leave some baggage behind.

Lord, I thank you for all the assurance that your mercy is great enough to cover all my past mistakes. Let me learn from those errors in the past, let me overcome them, and let me seek your power for renewal in my life.

WEDNESDAY ..... PSALM 23

How to Live in the Face of Death

And now it's gene therapy and transplanted organs ... there seems to be no limit to what humans can do. These kinds of scientific breakthroughs are miracles, continuing witnesses to the marvel of the Creator's creation.



But such scientific/medical breakthroughs are deceptive. They foster the illusion that we are making progress on our own. We seem to be gaining control of our destiny and there are those who believe that someday we may even conquer the greatest sickness of all, death.

In a thousand ways, people seek to avoid the thought of death and push the murmur of its presence out of earshot.

Holy Week, especially the events of the next few days, will help us to avoid that problem. During this week, death will be all around us. We will have an opportunity to stare death in the face. We will learn once more how one death changed all others that followed after it.

We will see death in its proper context as a separation from God. **We will discover that it is not so much death that we fear, but rather that we deserve to die.** The costly suffering on the cross teaches us this ... but it also brings us a touch of realism enabling us to confront our own death realistically and with it the hope of the resurrection.

Good Shepherd, today I will reflect on the many times that the fear of death has cast a shadow over my life, but I will not stop here. I will also reflect on the way you have been close to me even in the darkest night. I will place my hope in you.

MAUNDY THURSDAY ..... JOHN 13:31-35

A NEW COMMANDMENT

The tempo of the drama now picks up and moves to a swift conclusion, but with yet another startling event.

Martin Luther is said to have been asked what he would do if he knew that he was going to die tomorrow. His response, "Plant an apple tree."

Christ knew that tomorrow he would give up his life for the world. Notice that he does not spend his last hours thinking and talking about himself, no long soliloquies on the meaning of suffering, the extent to which he was going for the sake of others. He made no attempt "to get things in order" before his end. Instead **he forgets himself and serves others in the washing of the feet of the disciples, no task too lowly for the servant who was also Lord.**

Then, in bread and wine he offers himself. This act would be remembered as one of service, repeated with thanksgiving by the community of saints around the world. It would be his visible legacy—an example of how much he was willing to give for others.

Those who confess Christ will remember the example their Lord set on this Holy Thursday and seek to become disciples and servants for the world.

Today, the church commemorates the institution of the Lord's Supper. What better way do we have for remembering than by participating in that sacrament and resolving to find ways for Christ-like service to others?

GOOD FRIDAY ..... LUKE 23:33-46

THE FINAL BATTLE

He was not the first or the last innocent person who would be crucified by the Romans—but he was different from any of the others. He uttered no protest, no cursing of his abusers, only a prayer of forgiveness for those who were now in charge and those who watched. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This was a turning point in world history—a reversal of the trend of evil repaying evil, an act so powerful in its significance that, remembering it, there would be those who would follow in

every age, asking for the strength to forgive instead of retaliate.

The first word that our Lord uttered from the cross was his last prayer, and it rose to heaven burdened as no other prayer, heavy with all of the sins of the world. The fear and loneliness of all who had gone before and all who would come after rose with that prayer to the heart of the Father.

At the top of that lonely hill that Friday were focused the sins of all time upon the sinless Son of God. As O.P. Kretzmann said, "Here absolutes met." All sinfulness and the sinless Son of God. All the rebellion of human beings and the self-giving love of God ... a Father whose heart was so large that it could embrace all of the sins of the world and still have room for forgiveness.

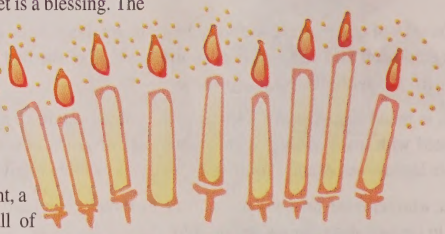
Good Friday is the story of God's wrath against sin and God's love for the sinner, and it is called Good Friday because God's love won!

Today I will set aside ten minutes for silent meditation on the meaning of suffering and death as well as the promise that in him there is victory over both.

HOLY SATURDAY ..... MATTHEW 11:25-27

IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT

There comes a time when quiet is a blessing. The tumult of the past days ... the tears and the despair and the darkness are almost overwhelming. It takes quiet to let it sink in.



Let the candle burn low tonight, a vigil of discovery of how all of history itself has rushed toward fulfillment ... prophets of old had their say and what they said was coming true.

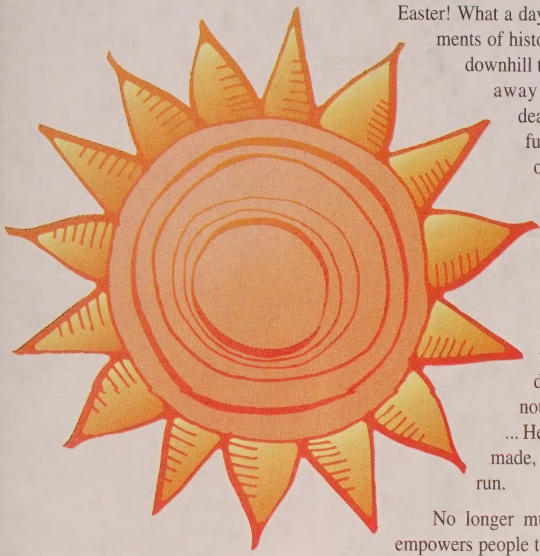
In the quiet of that Saturday evening after Good Friday, the forces of all evil were poised for victory—but only poised! They didn't win. And tomorrow would come startling news and the beginning of a new era!

A longing for answers settles in with new intensity this Holy Saturday. What is the real meaning of all the things that have happen this past week? How can it be? ... God willing to suffer? For me?

In one sense, the story of Lent and Easter is not the story of the settling of accounts between good and evil. It is God settling accounts with himself, making peace with himself, being willing to pay the price to buy back his own. Easter is God coming to grips with the largesse of his unconditional love, willing to spend it all for the creation he loves.

On this Sabbath day, when the evening light falls softly on the page, listen and you will hear the words: "Come, for all things are now ready."

alleluia!



Easter! What a day! From the early moments of history, life has been on a downhill trek, a melancholy fall away from God toward death. Time runs like a fuse through the fabric of life, and that fuse is burning.

The astounding news of this day is that life can begin again. This news is so astounding that it virtually turns the world upside down. Since the announcement, "He is risen ... He is not here," was first made, death has been on the run.

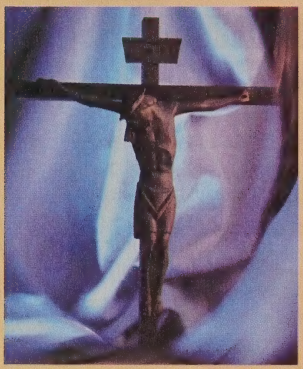
No longer must sin destroy; God empowers people to work in love and to discover a strength in their lives which transcends the hardships they face. By his grace they believe, even in the face of death, that the best is yet to be.

No longer is life a process of "marking time" toward death, but a countdown to the greatest experience that life has to offer, reunion with God.

Let this good news fill your life today—with all its implications for rekindling love in your relationships and enabling you to live with joyful hope.

Lord, let your Good News fill my life today and each day hereafter. Let my life be a torch kindled by the fire of your costly love—shared with me so that I might share it with others. Today I celebrate that love!

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. —Romans 6:4



I AM THE WAY

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

—John 14:2-6

We have wandered
Into the valley of the shadow of death.
The darkness deepens,
Robbing the landscape of color.
The air, heavy and still,
Weighs upon us like a pall.
The din is horrible
And torturous.
Our bleating is vain,
And our hope is lost.

But wait!

There is a presence here ...
Familiar and kind.
The presence of One
Who has walked this path before,
And has returned—
To guide.
Listen ...
He calls your name.

Follow ....

—Peter J. Mead

The Road Back To God was written by Larry W. Neeb. Some of these devotions first appeared in the 1983 work *The Road Back To God* by the same author. ©Copyright 1983 and 1995 by Creative Communications for the Parish, Inc., 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127, 314/821-1363. Cover photo by Gene Plaisted. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. **RG-1**

FOR WORSHIPING WITH US

Parish Occasion Card ***Thanks for Worshipping With Us*** published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127, (314) 821-1363. © Copyright 1994. Cover art by Sally Beck; verse by Lois Scheer.
P-52

Our songs of praise were more joyful today because your voice joined ours— Please come again.

Dear Pastor,

This special card is one of more than a dozen specially designed cards to assist communications in your ministry. Look in the Creative Communications catalog to see examples of the other cards and their different themes in ministry.

✝

THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

A Series of Special Services for Lent

THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

In Christian art and classic heraldry, over the centuries the Cross has taken various forms, many of them rich in meaning. This Lenten series uses shape, history, background, and even color to trace, step by step, the suffering and death of our Lord and apply its meaning to the lives of God's people today.

- ✢ Ashen gray (for Ash Wednesday and the gathering storm of Christ's Passion), the *Crusaders' Cross* begins the journey.
- ✢ The *Hunters' Cross* (which seems to be made of arrow tips) takes us to our Lord's betrayal and arrest.
- ✢ The royal blue *Sovereign's Cross and Orb* sees the King of kings on trial before a Roman ruler.
- ✢ The *Cross of Lorraine*, once a symbol of WWII French resistance, speaks of constancy in the midst of change.
- ✢ Blood red, the three-stepped *Cross of the Ascent* leads to Calvary, urging faith, hope, and love.
- ✢ Even today in Europe and Canada, a green cross identifies a pharmacy; so the *Arced Cross* speaks of ultimate healing.

The Wisdom of the Cross—***Services for Lent*** were written by Arden W. Mead, concept by James P. Poerschke, with artwork by Sally Beck for **Creative Communications for the Parish**. © Copyright 1993. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. **CW-7**

THE BODY OF CHRIST

A Series of Special Services for Lent

THE BODY OF CHRIST

A Series of Special Services for Lent

Week by week God's people, who are the Body of Christ in God's world today, are invited to meditate thoughtfully on the human body with which our Lord first brought God's saving love to the world:

✢ The Feet of Christ to lead the way ✢

✢ The Hands of Christ to help and heal ✢

✢ The Mouth of Christ to speak God's Word ✢

✢ The Ears of Christ to hear our prayers ✢

✢ The Eyes of Christ to see our needs ✢

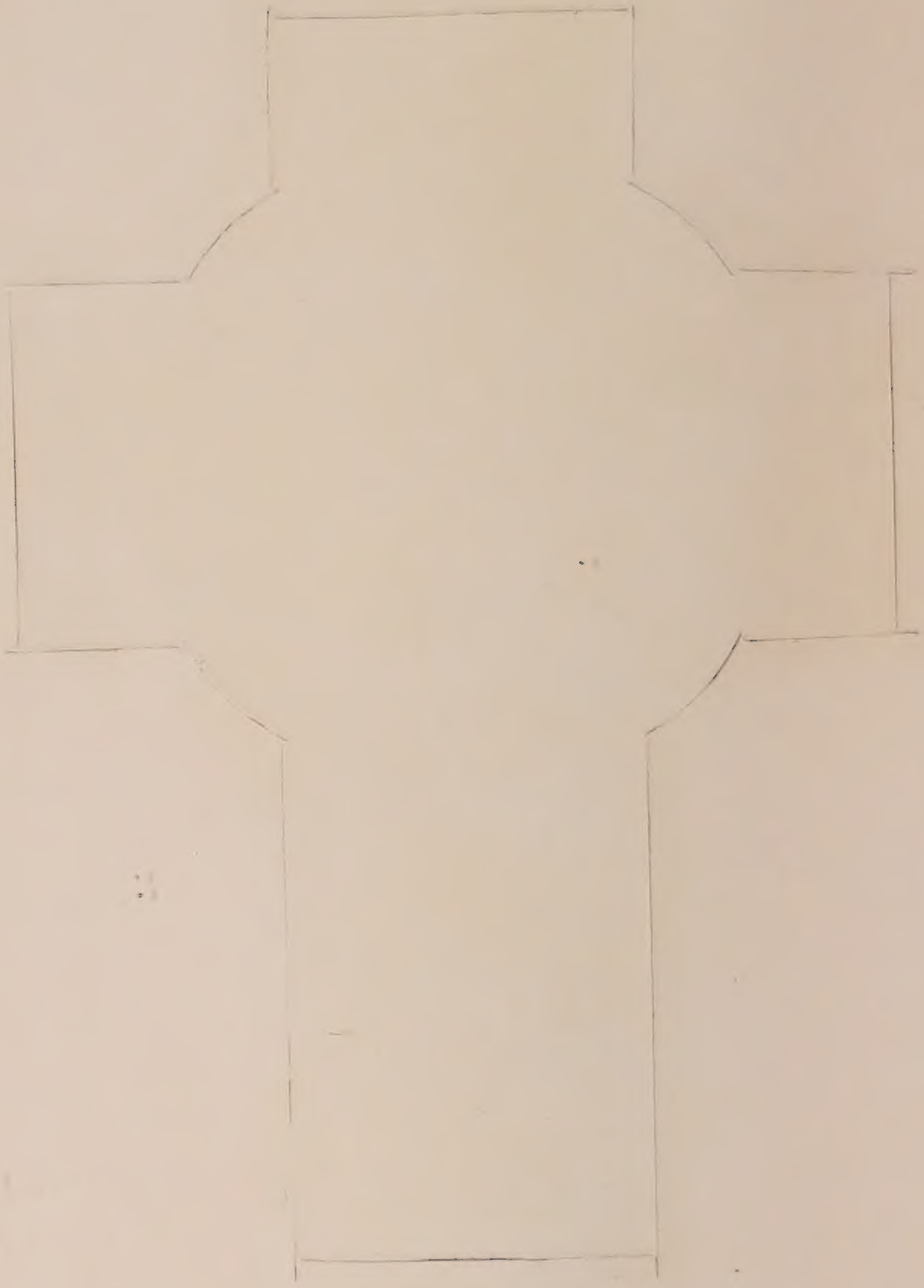
✢ The Heart of Christ beating with love ✢

The Body of Christ—*A Series of Special Services for Lent* were written by Harlan Kaden, with services by Arden W. Mead for **Creative Communications for the Parish**. © Copyright 1992. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

BD-7

Please press along the perforated edges to remove the **Easter Cross.**

©Copyright 1995 by **Creative Communications for the Parish**. Photo by King Schoenfeld. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. **EC-G**



Wednesday, April 5
Doers of the word ..... James 1: 16-27

Thursday, April 6
Like obedient children ..... 1 Peter 1: 13-23

Friday, April 7
Abounding in love ..... 1 Cor. 13: 1-13

Saturday, April 8
Lives of holiness ..... 2 Peter 3: 8-14

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Monday, April 10
The King of Peace ..... Zechariah 9: 9-10

Tuesday, April 11
A harvest sown ..... James 3:13–4:12

Wednesday, April 12
Live peaceably with all ..... Romans 12: 14-21

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Holy Thursday, April 13
I see the heavens opened ..... Acts 7: 54-60

Good Friday, April 14
Christ died for us sinners .... Romans 5: 1-11

Saturday, April 15
We will reign ..... 2 Timothy 2: 8-13

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Easter Sunday, April 16
The glory revealed ..... Romans 8: 15-30

"Blessed Are You," The Savior Said—Readings for Lent 1995 Based on the Beatitudes was compiled by Arden W. Mead for **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Photo by Gene Plaisted. Copyright © 1995. Printed in the U.S.A. **BF-7**

BLESSED ARE YOU
THE SAVIOR SAID

Daily Bible Readings for Lent, 1995
—The Beatitudes—

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the word "Blessed" — a word the Savior repeats again and again. Apparently he really means it. Indeed he does; he suffered and died to make it so!

The daily Bible readings in this Lenten bookmark invite you to ponder the great blessings which are offered you through faith in Jesus Christ — to receive them, and to use them.

May God bless you in your Lenten meditation ... and use you to share God's blessings with others as well.

God's Grace and Mercy Still Abound

A Litany for the First Sunday in Lent

Melody ..... Rhosymedre

You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.

Return unto the Lord
With hearts sincere and pure.
Repentant, heed his Word,
Believe his promise sure:
God's grace and mercy still abound—
That is the blessed Gospel's sound,
For steadfast love with him is found.

When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them and save them.

Create, O God, in me
A heart made clean from sin;
Renew, with mercy free,
My spirit right within.
Lord, cast me not away from you!
Restore salvation's joy anew;
Uphold me with your Spirit true.

It is written, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

We with our lips confess
What in our hearts we trust:
God has drawn nigh to bless,
To make us wholly just.
The harsh temptations that we see
At Christ's firm bidding all must flee,
And ours shall be the victory!

When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them and save them.

Lord Jesus, come to bless,
To keep your people strong
Here in the wilderness
And all our journey long.
Oh, lead us safely day by day;
Give us the Spirit to obey
And follow in the heav'nward way.

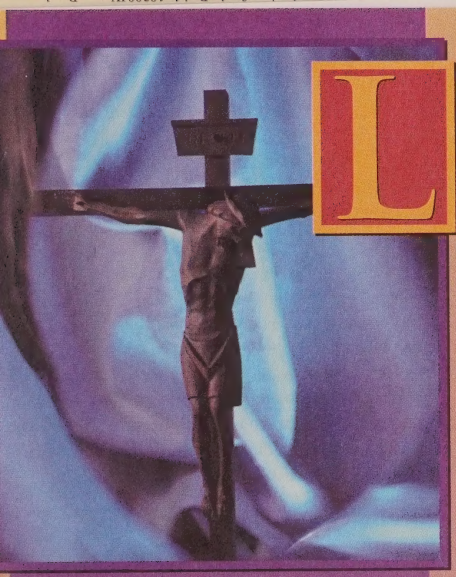
✠ ✠ ✠

At the close of the service

BENEDICTION

The Lord God bless and keep
And cause his face to shine,
Regard with favor deep,
And grant you peace divine.
For all God's blessings, full and free,
To Father, Son, and Spirit be
All praise and thanks eternally!

"God's Grace and Mercy Still Abound" Lenten Litanies are written by Arden W. Mead & published in six parts by **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Copyright © 1995. Photo by James E. Adams. Printed in the U.S.A.



LENT

THE SEASON

Easter is the oldest Christian season. **Lent** appeared sometime later. We use ancient terms and symbols from times and cultures foreign to us during these seasons. But Lent and Easter are alive and well in the Church, because they focus on the center of our faith from which we draw our life in Christ.

Lent is a time of *preparation.* The observance of Lent during the 40 days (plus six Sundays) before Easter appeared in the early Church as an imitation of Jesus' 40 days of self-denial and prayer in the wilderness. New adult converts to Christianity practiced Lenten penance, personal asceticism and prayer. These prepared them to receive their Baptism, Confirmation and their first Lord's Supper in the Saturday evening vigil before Easter.

The Lord's Supper, Easter and Baptism are related to the Jewish **Passover**, as it commemorates the Old Testament Israelites' rescue from death (the Exodus) and their new life as God's chosen people.

Easter, *the* Sunday of the Church Year, is followed by 50 days leading to the **Pentecost** festival. For new Christians these first days after entering the Church were a time to explore how the experience of the Easter Vigil would change their lives.

Today Lent remains a time for us to examine our lives, preparing for Holy Week and Easter. On the day of Christ's resurrection we celebrate *our baptism*, for baptism joins all of God's people with the death and victorious resurrection of our Lord.

THE SYMBOLS

Colors: *Violet* is the usual color for all of Lent, symbolizing repentance. *Black* dominates on Good Friday, while *white* is the color for Easter.

Ashes placed on the forehead hint at an ancient ritual–covering oneself with ashes in penitence. Receiving the cross-shaped "smudge" reminds us that we are dust and is a public statement of repentance. Usually the ashes are from the previous year's Palm Sunday branches, illustrating the circle of the Church Year.

Forty Days of Lent parallel the 40 days which Jesus spent in fasting and prayer in the wilderness.

Palm branches in ancient times signified victory and were used in triumphal processions by Romans and Jews.

Paschal or **Easter Candle** is a large, decorated and dated candle, new at each year's Easter Vigil, lit at the Vigil's bonfire and carried into the darkened church to be burned at services and baptisms during the year. It stands for the risen Savior who is the light of the world.

THE TERMS

Lent is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning *"spring."* The season lasts from Ash Wednesday until Maundy Thursday of Holy Week.

Ash Wednesday is the day on which Lent begins, often observed in worship by receiving a cross of ashes on the forehead.

Holy Week includes the days from Palm Sunday through Easter.

Palm or **Passion Sunday** has contrasting names, one because of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem (to waving palm branches), the other because this Sunday begins Jesus' days of suffering and death.

Maundy Thursday gets its name from Jesus' "new commandment" *(mandatum* in Latin*)*, to love one another, which he spoke during the Passover meal when he washed his disciples' feet and instituted the Lord's Supper.

Good Friday marks the events of Jesus's trial, crucifixion, death and burial, sometimes with special *Tre Ore (three-hour)* observances. The altar may be stripped of all decoration and the church darkened until Saturday's Easter Vigil.

Easter Vigil is celebrated on Holy Saturday evening after sundown; historically a time for baptizing, confirming and receiving new members and celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Easter comes from the name of an ancient spring festival. Easter is the "great Sunday," after which each Sunday worship service is modeled.

Fasting, Abstinence, Almsgiving, Self-denial and Penance refer to the Christian practice of intentionally giving one's time, energy and possessions for others, especially the needy, as Christ gave himself for us.

THE SCRIPTURES

The Sunday Scripture readings for Lent this year tell the history of God's ***covenant*** or ***agreement*** with his people, seen from Old and New Testament perspectives. Themes which connect each Sunday's Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel readings on each of the six Sundays might be the following:

1 The Lord keeps his Covenant with all who trust him.
2 Some fall under judgment for rejecting God's Word.
3 The Lord has revealed himself as our life-giving Savior; those who worship other powers find death.
4 The Lord maintains the Covenant, forgiving us *through his own suffering*—a remarkable Gospel!
5 God sends his redemption in a new form that some reject.
6 Faithfulness and humility are characteristics of Christ and of Christians who live in the Covenant relationship.

DAILY READINGS

Ash Wed. ..... Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Thu. ..... Mt. 3:1-12
Fri. ..... Mt. 3:13-17
Sat. ..... Is. 11:1-5

1st Sun. ..... Lk. 4:1-13
Mon. ..... Lk. 4:14-22
Tue. ..... Mt. 4:12-25
Wed. ..... Mt. 8:1-17
Thu. ..... Mt. 10:1-15
Fri. ..... Mt. 12:1-14
Sat. ..... Is. 40:1-11

2nd Sun. ..... Lk. 13:31-35
Mon. ..... Mt. 13:10-17
Tue. ..... Mt. 13:24-35
Wed. ..... Mt. 13:44-56
Thu. ..... Mt. 14:13-21
Fri. ..... Mt. 16:13-21
Sat. ..... Is. 65:17-25

3rd Sun. ..... Lk. 13:1-9
Mon. ..... Mt. 16:21-28
Tue. ..... Mt. 17:1-13
Wed. ..... Mt. 18:1-6
Thu. ..... Mt. 18:21-35
Fri. ..... Mt. 19:16-26
Sat. ..... Is. 60:1-5

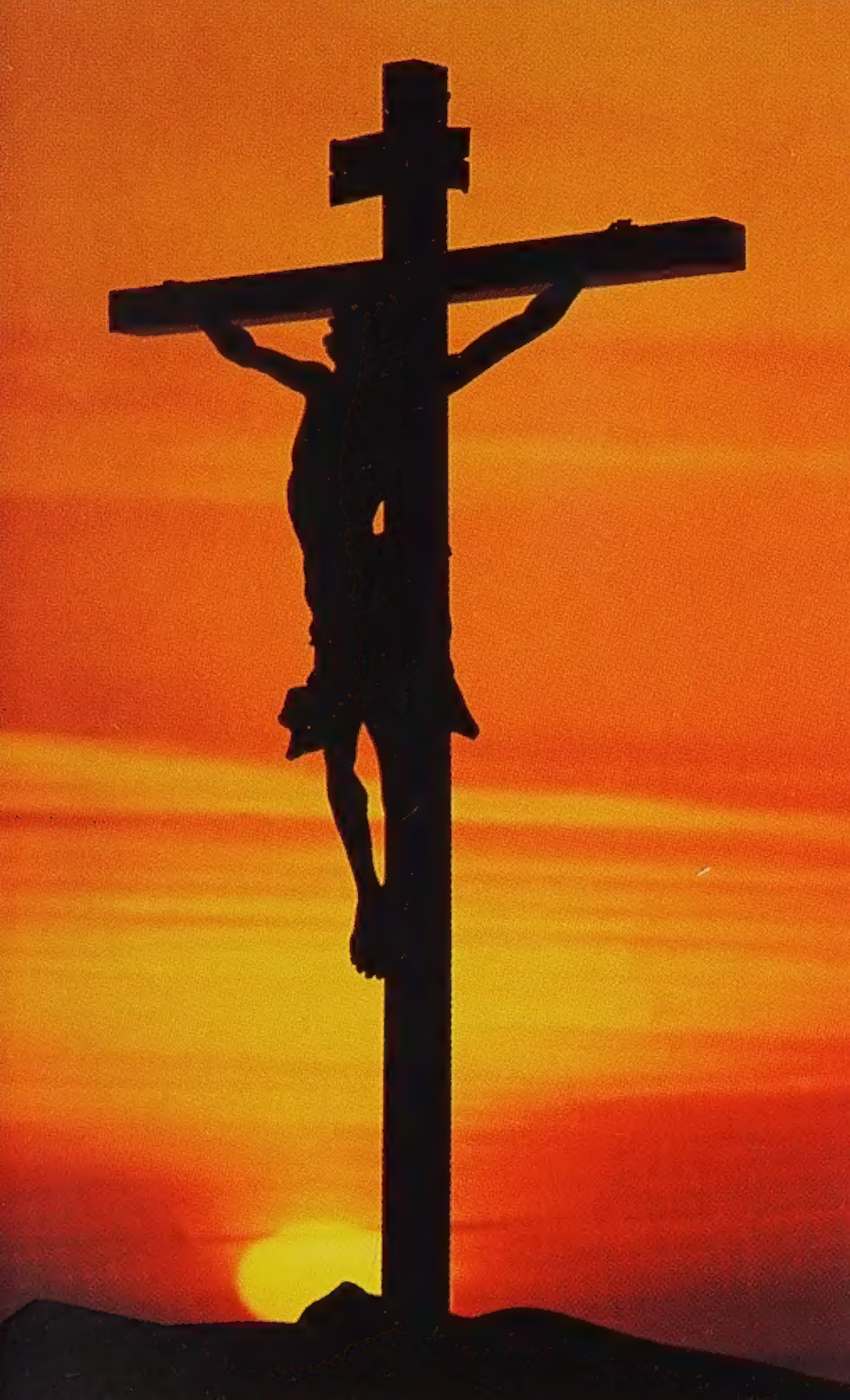
4th Sun. .. Lk. 15:1-3, 11-32
Mon. ..... Mt. 21:1-11
Tue. ..... Mt. 21:12-17
Wed. ..... Mt. 21:23-27
Thu. ..... Mt. 21:28-32
Fri. ..... Mt. 22:34-40
Sat. ..... Ps. 22

5th Sun. ..... Lk. 20:9-19
Mon. ..... Mt. 24:1-14
Tue. ..... Mt. 25:1-13
Wed. ..... Mt. 25:14-30
Thu. ..... Mt. 25:31-46
Fri. ..... Mt. 26:1-16
Sat. ..... Is. 53

Palm Sun. . Lk. 22:14-23:56
Mon. ..... Is. 42:1-7
Tue. ..... Is. 49:1-6
Wed. ..... Is. 50:4-9
M. Thu. .... Jn. 13:1-5, 12-15
G. Fri. ..... Jn. 18-19
Holy Sat. ..... Rm. 6:3-11

Easter ..... Jn. 20:1-18

The Sacred Season: Lent is written by King Schoenfeld and published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. © Copyright 1995. All rights reserved. Photo by Gene Plaisted. Printed in the USA.



PRAYER FOR LENT

LORD GOD, through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ your Son you set us free from sin. In baptism, we embraced that freedom, rejected sin and promised to live in your light. Help us this Lent to see the truth: that we have not always lived up to that promise and that you are always ready to give us the joy of the resurrection. May our Lenten journey bring us closer to you through prayer, fasting and acts of charity. We ask this through the Risen Lord. Amen.

© 1993 Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127.
Printed in the U.S.A. Photo by Gene Plaisted, O.S.C.
PK-D

CHRISTIAN HISTORY INSTITUTE'S Issue #13

Glimpses

The Bible
Tischendorf

of people, events, life and faith from
the Church Across the Ages
CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS EDITION

TREASURE IN THE TRASH PILE— AND RICHES AMONG THE ROCKS

How did the Bible become a book with special authority for Christians? Can we be certain after two thousand years or more that what we have in our Bible is what was originally written? How did the Bible come down to us? This begins a six issue series on how we got our Bible. Our investigation begins with a fascinating story in a very unlikely place—a trash basket in the Sinai desert.

Constantine Tischendorf—noted German Biblical scholar saved a critically important Bible manuscript from being carelessly burned.

The Incredible Discovery

In 1844, the German scholar Constantine Tischendorf was touring the East in search of old manuscripts, that is, documents written by hand. In the library of the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai he noticed a basket filled with pages of an old manuscript. Tischendorf was shocked! This was the oldest Greek writing this seasoned scholar had ever seen, and the pages were from the Greek Old Testament. Taking 43 pages out of the basket, Tischendorf asked the librarian about them. To his horror he learned the pages had been placed in the trash basket for fuel, and two basket loads of such papers had already been burned! Though the monks admitted there were more pages of the manuscript, Tischendorf's enthusiasm made them wary, and they would not show him any more. They did allow Tischendorf to take the 43 pages he had rescued with him, however, and Tischendorf urged the monks to use something else in their fires!

Back For More

In 1853 Tischendorf returned to the monastery, but the monks would not show him the remainder of the manuscript. Six years later, Tischendorf again returned to the Sinai monastery, this time under the patronage of the Russian Tsar Alexander II, patron of the Greek Orthodox Church. On this visit, a monk took Tischendorf to his room and pulled down a cloth-wrapped manuscript which had been stored with some cups and dishes on a shelf above the door. Tischendorf immediately recognized the pages as the remainder of the book whose pages he had rescued from the trash pile. He suggested the monastery present the manuscript to the tsar of Russia as

protector of the Greek church, which they agreed to do. When the communists took over the Russian government, they had little use for such a Christian manuscript, so in 1933 the Soviet Union sold the manuscript to the British Museum for £100,000.

The manuscript became known as the *Codex Sinaiticus* (book from the Sinai), and it is one of the most important early manuscripts of the Bible. Dating from about the middle of the fourth century, *Sinaiticus* is one of the earliest complete manuscripts of the New Testament we have. Some have even speculated this might be one of the fifty Bibles the Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to prepare after he had made Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire.

The manuscripts we have older than Sinaiticus contain only portions of the New Testament. Some of these date from the second century, just fifty years or so after many of the New Testament books were written. Many of the earliest church manuscripts were undoubtedly destroyed during the times of persecution against the early Christians.

The Earlier the Better

In these early manuscripts writing was continuous—there were no spaces between words and usually none between sentences. Punctuation marks were rarely used before the eighth century. There also were no chapter or verse divisions. With every manuscript having to be copied by hand, it was easy for mistakes and variations to be made. As time went on, and manuscripts were recopied, these mistakes could be compounded. Understandably, then, the earlier manuscripts closer to the time of the original writing probably have fewer mistakes, and Tischendorf's discovery of the fourth century *Codex Sinaiticus*, then, was of enormous help for scholars to check the accuracy of our New Testament writings.

Dead Sea Scrolls Discovered

One hundred years after Tischendorf's great discovery, in 1945, a shepherd boy, Muhammed ed Dhib, was looking for his sheep among the rocks near the Dead Sea.

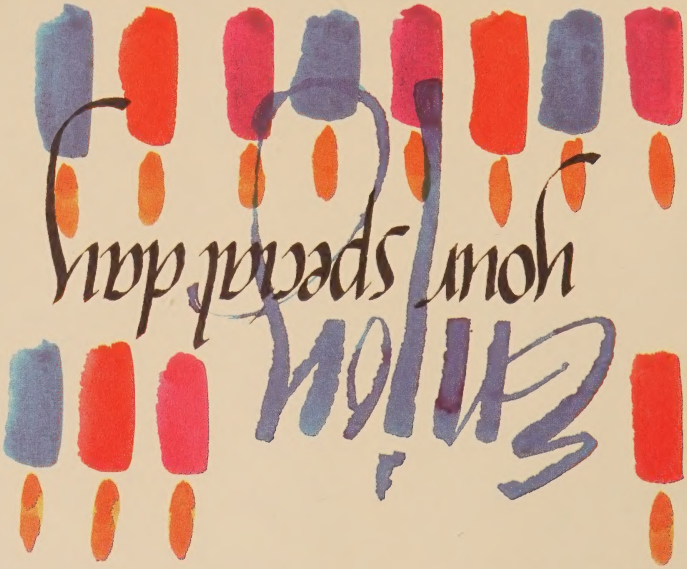
What Does "Bible" Mean?

The Greek word *biblios* originally meant the pithy part of the papyrus stalk. The word came from *Byblos*, the ancient Phoenician city from which papyrus was exported. The word easily came to mean the papyrus roll itself and later the books made from papyrus. Bible, then, means book!

He threw a rock into a cave and heard jars shattering. After investigating he discovered clay jars stuffed with ancient manuscripts. To date over 800 scrolls have been found dating from the second century B.C. into the first century A.D.—and the investigation still continues. Fragments, if not complete copies, of every book of the Old Testament except Esther have been found, making these almost 1000 years older than the oldest copies of the Hebrew Old Testament previously known.

There are more manuscripts of the Bible than any other single book from the ancient world—over 25,000 manuscripts of portions of the New Testament. Many of these are comparatively early manuscripts; other classical works typically have 1200-1400 years separating the original writing and surviving manuscript copies. The number and antiquity of the Biblical manuscripts ensure that the Bible accurately reflects the writings of the prophets and the apostles. The Dead Sea scrolls and *Codex Sinaiticus* were two of the most important discoveries of all time. They gave scholars evidence to verify that our copies of the Bible have been reliably transmitted from the earliest times. Some might consider these discoveries just amazingly lucky finds. Many others, however, recognize here God's Providence preserving and confirming His written Word.

GLIMPSES is published 12 times a year by Christian History Institute, Ken Curtis Editor. Copyright 1994 by Christian History Institute. All rights reserved. This edition published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127, (314) 821-1363. X-13



Parish Occasion Card ***Enjoy Your Special Day*** published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127, (314) 821-1363. © Copyright 1994. Cover art by Sally Beck; verse by Lois Scheer. **P-55**

We share the joy of your special day,
For God made you in a special way.
And we are thankful.

The Prayers

(Each petition is followed by a moment of silence, then the following response.)

When human strength cannot avail,
God's love breaks through!

The Offering

(The service continues with the celebration of Holy Communion or with a hymn and the Lord's Prayer.)

The Lord's Prayer

A Parting Blessing

When human strength cannot avail,
God's love breaks through!
As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, abounding in thanksgiving.
In Jesus Christ, God's love breaks through!
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.

God's Love Breaks Through was written by Randy Walquist; edited with orders of service by Arden W. Mead; creedal hymn by Peter J. Mead; bulletin and memento art by Sally Beck. Published by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Copyright ©1995. Printed in the U.S.A. GB-P

GOD'S LOVE *breaks* THROUGH

WHERE LIVES ARE BROKEN HELPLESSLY
GOD'S LOVE BREAKS THROUGH

—A SERVICE FOR LENT—

A Lenten Beginning ..... Melody: Glory Be to Jesus

(Isaiah 53:7-9; Isaiah 61:1; Ephesians 2:13)

Glory be to Jesus
Who, in bitter pains,
Poured for me the lifeblood
From his sacred veins.

Grace and life eternal
In that blood I find.
Blest be his compassion,
Infinitely kind!

He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;
he never said a word.
Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared,
he never said a word.
He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die,
and no one cared about his fate.
He was put to death for the sins of our people.
He was placed in a grave with evil men, he was buried with the rich,
even though he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie.

Glory be to Jesus,
Whose dear blood was shed
That from death God's people
Might to life be led.

By his cross and passion
We with God have peace,
For his blood has purchased
From our sins release.

Where lives are broken helplessly,
God's love breaks through!
The Spirit of the Lord God is sent to bring good news to the oppressed and to bind up the broken.
In Jesus Christ, God's love breaks through!
In Jesus Christ all who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. In him we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Glory be to Jesus
Who, our cups to fill,
Came to be our servant,
Faithful to God's will.

Thus our faith is anchored
In God's promise true:
For where lives are broken,
There God's love breaks through.

The Prayer of the Day

The Word of God ..... Melody: Abide with Me

Unto the Lord with broken lives return.
Trust not your goodness; true repentance learn.
Grace and compassion flow from heav'n above,
For God is slow to anger, filled with love.

The Lesson ..... Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Create in me a heart made clean from sin.
A steadfast spirit, Lord, renew within.
Your Holy Spirit ne'er remove from me,
But in your saving joy, Lord, make me free.

The Gospel ..... Luke 23:39-43

Let all who languish hear the hopeful word:
God has drawn near us; our request is heard.
Christ Jesus died, God's promise to renew:
Where lives are broken, there God's love breaks through.

The Homily

A Creedal Hymn ..... Melody: Gethsemane

Through chaotic darkness broke
Thine own voice, and light awoke.
Summoned by thy Word alone,
Earth thy footstool, heav'n thy throne,
Still resound with echoes strong
Of their great Creator's song.

When the time had fully come,
Broke into the world thy Son,
Born of Mary, born to end
Death's dark reign, our hearts to mend.
Sent into our world to die,
Now he lives and reigns on high.

Still thy Holy Spirit binds
Broken hearts and souls and minds,
Binds thy Church throughout all time,
Binds thy saints in light sublime,
Till, with life renewed, shall we
All thy heav'nly glories see.

1995 LENTEN CALENDAR

Daily Scripture and Reflection for the Sacred Season

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 *March* **Ash Wednesday** God wants us to return with our whole heart this Lent. Let us freely offer our hearts to God. *Joel 2:12-18*	**2 Hope** Jesus promises his followers that they will move through suffering to new life. This is the hope of the cross. *Luke 9:22-25*	**3 The Fast God Desires** Our sincere repentance will be expressed in action. We will find healing and the help we need from God. *Isaiah 58:1-9*	**4 Trust In The Lord** When you ask God for help, trust that you will receive it. You may have to wait, but you will receive it. *Psalm 86*
5 Assured What a great assurance we have when we put our faith in Jesus Christ! All who believe in him will be saved. *Romans 10:8-13*	**6 Respond** Jesus identifies with the poor and the needy of our world. Our response to them, he says, is our response to him as well. *Matthew 25:31-46*	**7 God's Word** Scripture is meant to nourish our souls just as bread nourishes our bodies. Take and eat. *Isaiah 55:10-11*	**8 Repent** God is touched by sorrow for sin and a genuine desire to change. We grow closer to God through repentance. *Jonah 3:1-10*	**9 The Golden Rule** Following Jesus is simple, but not always easy. Turn to the Father for the help you need. *Matthew 7:7-12*	**10 Hope In The Lord** No matter how discouraged we might become, our God is there to lift us up to new life and hope. *Psalm 130*	**11 Walk In God's Ways** We are to become God's people, not merely as individuals, but as a living body of faith. *Deut. 26:16-19*
12 Listen To Him The glory of Jesus is shown to his disciples so that we might listen to his words and believe in him. *Luke 9:28-36*	**13 Mercy** When we come to see and admit our own sinfulness, we can begin to embrace the full measure of God's mercy. *Daniel 9:4-10*	**14 Set Things Right** No sin is so great that it cannot be wiped away, so great is the power and mercy of God. *Isaiah 1:10, 16-20*	**15 The Gift** Those who desire the new life promised by Jesus must live as he did: giving of himself in love and service. *Matthew 20:17-28*	**16 Renewal** The Lord refreshes the human heart and gives us what we need. Let us remember that in difficult times. *Jeremiah 17:5-10*	**17 The Foundation** Jesus Christ is the keystone of the structure, the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life for us. *Matthew 21:33-46*	**18 God's Delight** With a marvelous mercy that is hard to comprehend, God actually enjoys forgiving our sins. *Micah 7:14-20*
19 Reform We bear fruit in our lives only with effort. The first step is to listen to the words of Jesus, and believe in them. *Luke 13:1-9*	**20 Simple Gifts** Sometimes it is the ordinary things that bring healing: a smile, a kind word, a moment in prayer. *2 Kings 5:1-15*	**21 A Ready Heart** God will surely teach us the right path for our lives, but we must make our hearts ready to learn. *Psalm 25*	**22 Fulfilled** Jesus in his life, death and resurrection fulfilled the law. To obey God's law, learn from Jesus and follow his ways. *Matthew 5:17-19*	**23 United** Jesus draws together all people who believe in him and continue his mission of spreading the Good News. *Luke 11:14-23*	**24 Respond** Above all else, God wants our wholehearted love, a freely given response to the One who has loved us first. *Mark 12:28-34*	**25 Love, Not Sacrifice** God desires our love more than our sacrifices. We express that love in worship and by caring for one another. *Hosea 6:1-6*

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26 *March* **Come To Life** We can rejoice when others receive forgiveness if we remember how much we have been forgiven. *Luke 15:11-32*	**27 Faith In Promises** Try to have faith in Jesus even before you have evidence that what he has promised will come to pass. *John 4:43-54*	**28 Ever-Present Help** God is truly our refuge and strength if we offer thanks in the good times and ask for help in the bad. *Psalm 46*	**29 Mercy** By his deeds and the way he lived, Jesus revealed the love the Father who sent him has for each one of us. *John 5:17-30*	**30 Key To Peace** Happiness will come if we seek to please God rather than depend on the approval of other people. *John 5:31-47*	**31 Love** God is near to us at all times, but never more so than when our hearts are broken and our spirits weighed down. *Psalm 34*	**1** *April* **Our Defender** The Lord searches our hearts and minds. God is our defense against those who condemn us. *Jeremiah 11:18-20*
2 Creation God's creative power is still at work, not only in the natural world, but in the hearts and minds of human beings. *Isaiah 43:16-21*	**3 Led By The Shepherd** As a shepherd, Jesus will guide us along the right path, even when we are not aware of being led. *Psalm 23*	**4 A Sign For All** Jesus is a sign of God's love, not only to those who believe but to an unfaithful world as well. *John 8:21-30*	**5 Faith** The strength of our faith may be measured by our willingness to believe even when we may have to suffer for it. *Daniel 3:14-20*	**6 A Way To Hope** Hope comes more easily if we can remember the blessings God has bestowed on us in the past. *Psalm 105:4-9*	**7 Good Works** Our good works and words are one sure sign that our hearts have been moved by the love of God. *John 10:31-42*	**8 Lasting Covenant** All who repent God takes back and sets free from all their sins. God's love will make us holy. *Ezekiel 37:21-28*
9 Palm Sunday As we recall Christ's Passion this week, let us praise God for the power that we, too, have seen. *Luke 19:28-40*	**10 Formed** God has formed a people to carry on the redemptive work of Jesus by proclaiming the Gospel with their lives. *Isaiah 42:1-7*	**11 God's Grace** We need the grace of God, not just our own strength of character, in order to follow Jesus. *John 13:31-38*	**12 Trust** Jesus put up with misunderstanding, insults, and betrayal in order to fulfill the will of the Father. *Isaiah 50:4-9*			

The Paschal Triduum

Maundy Thursday

When he washed the feet of the disciples, Jesus gave us an example of how we are to treat each other: with love expressed in action.

John 13:1-15

Good Friday

All human suffering is a reflection of the suffering of Jesus Christ. He knows what we are going through because he went through it. We can pray in confidence.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Easter Vigil

If we are willing to unite our suffering with the suffering and death of Christ, we will come to new life with him. That is God's promise; that is our hope.

Romans 6:3-11

Sacrifice

Burial

Resurrection

Traditional Lenten Disciplines

Worship & Meditation: During Lent, many congregations offer added opportunities for public worship and encourage their members to more frequent and fervent prayer, Bible study and private meditation on the saving love of God in Jesus Christ.

Fasting & Abstinence: As an aid to devotional life, many Christians give up certain foods or activities through Lent. Some also set aside certain days (Wednesdays or Fridays) for more rigorous fasting in the Lord's honor.

Almsgiving: Moved by the sacrifice of Christ, many Christians combine almsgiving with fasting, giving to the poor the money they saved by eating, drinking, or buying less as they rely more upon God's abundant grace.

1995 Lenten Calendar was compiled by Mark Neilsen and Arden Mead for **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. © 1995 Creative Communications for the Parish. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. Painting by Andrea Solario, *Lamentation*, Samuel H. Kress Collection, ©1993 National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

Prayers ✠ Offering

Preparation for Holy Communion ..... Melody: Ebenezer

Children of a loving Father,
Come, your hearts and lives prepare.
Gather 'round your Lord's own table
And unbounded blessings share;
By the Word of God here spoken
Hope is made reality;
Blood outpoured and body broken
That from sin we might be free!

The Lord's Supper

In body broken, blood outpoured,
God's love breaks through.
Lift up your hearts to thank the Lord.
It is an honor so to do.

Sanctus ..... Melody: Hamburg

Oh, holy, holy, holy Lord!
Lord God of hosts, by all adored!
Heaven and earth cannot contain
All of the glory of your name!

Hail, hosanna, God most high!
Blessed is he who now draws nigh
In the Lord's name, our Savior-King!
Our glad hosannas now we sing!

The Consecration and the Lord's Prayer

O Lamb of God, you take away
The sin of all, now hear us pray,
And grant us from our sin release:
Have mercy on us! Grant us peace!

(During the distribution, hymns may be sung.)

Benediction

Closing Hymn ..... Melody: O God Our Help

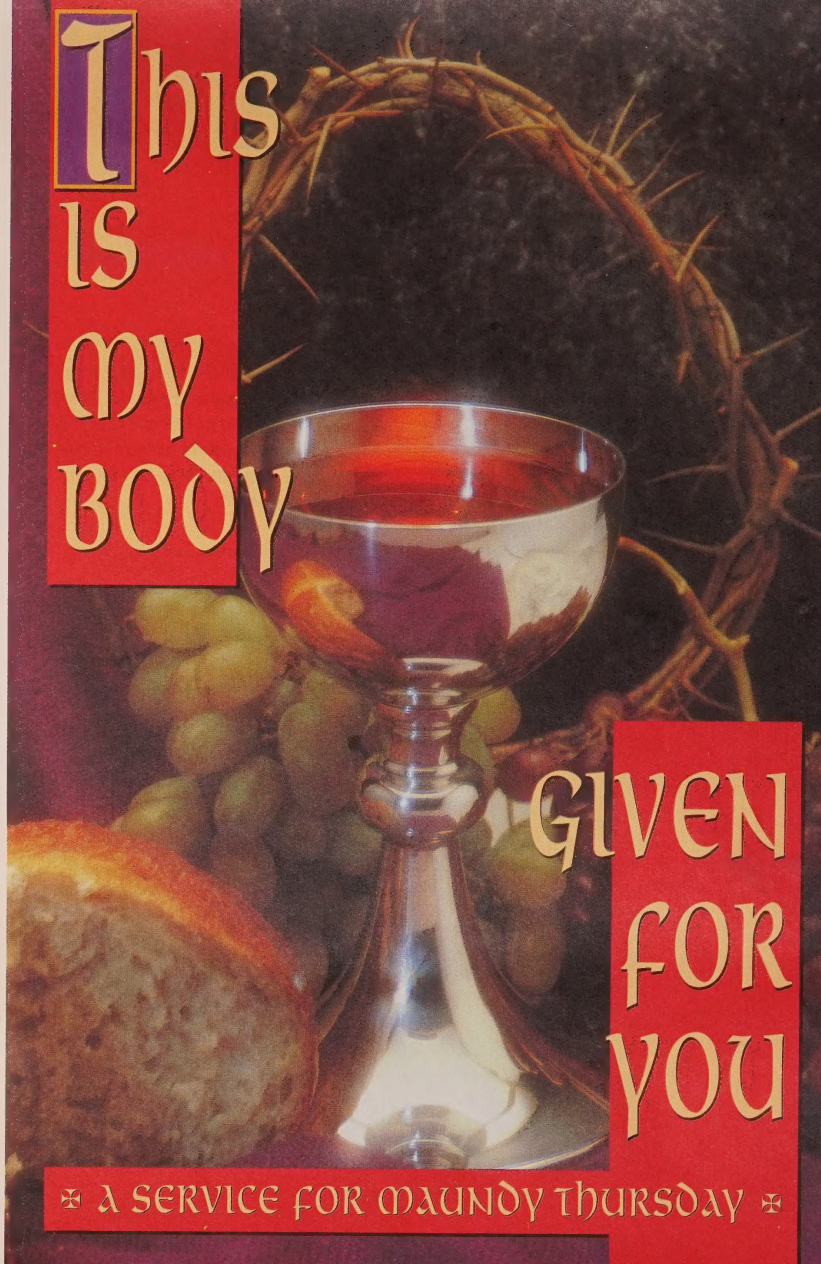
The mercy of the Lord adore,
Christ's great compassion see;
Our sins upon the cross he bore
That we might righteous be.

His body broken, blood outpoured
Becomes a token sure;
The loving kindness of the Lord
Forever shall endure.

Although the grave that beckons me
Shall turn me back to dust,
Yet in my flesh my God I'll see
In whom I place my trust.

No care my confidence can drown;
My gracious God forgives!
No grave can keep this body down,
For my Redeemer lives!

This **Maundy Thursday Service** was written by Arden W. Mead; creedal hymn by Peter J. Mead. Cover Photo by Jerry Koser. © Copyright 1995 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.
BY-D



This is my body given for you

✠ A Service for Maundy Thursday ✠

"THIS IS MY BODY, GIVEN FOR YOU"

—A SERVICE FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY—

Opening Hymn

Confession and Forgiveness ..... spoken responsively

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.
O God our Creator, we confess that we have not honored you with our bodies. Our feet are quick to walk the ways of wickedness. Our hands are eager to grasp and keep what is not truly ours. Our eyes are open to opportunity for every kind of evil. Our ears give heed to rumors, gossip, false witness and lies. We open our mouths to speak evil, and close them when we ought to speak. And from our hearts come all manner of evil intentions. Who shall deliver us from this body of death?
In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you.
He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.
By his wounds you have been healed.
Amen.

Kyrie ..... Melody: Ebenezer

For God's peace and for salvation:
Lord, have mercy; hear our prayer.
For God's peace to all creation:
Lord, have mercy; hear our prayer.
For all here who join in worship
With God's people ev'rywhere:
Help, save, comfort, and defend us.
Lord, have mercy; hear our prayer.

The Prayer of the Day

Lamb of God, our mighty Savior,
All our sins you take away.
Lamb of God, by your great favor,
Lord, have mercy now, we pray.
Lamb of God, our prayers attending,
Never let your mercies cease,
But, your Holy Spirit sending,
Grant us all your gift of peace.

The First Lesson

Psalmody, from Psalm 116 ..... Melody: Winchester Old

What shall I render to the Lord
For all his gifts so free?
Lift up your hearts unto the Lord;
His great deliv'rance see.

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

You servants of the Lord Most High,
God's praises gladly sing.
Come to his presence joyfully
And grateful off'rings bring.

I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

Lift up your hearts unto the Lord;
Your promises fulfill,
For he redeems your life from death
According to his will.

The Second Lesson

Verse ..... Melody: Ebenezer

Lo, the heav'nly host rejoices:
"Holy, holy, holy Lord!"
Lo, God's people join their voices:
"God of hosts, by all adored,
Heav'n and earth proclaim your glory!"
Blest is he who comes our King!
Let hosannas spread the story,
Heaven's praises echoing.

Gospel ✠ A Hymn

Homily

A Creedal Hymn ..... Melody: Gethsemane

Through chaotic darkness broke
Thine own voice, and light awoke.
Summoned by thy Word alone,
Earth thy footstool, heav'n thy throne,
Still resound with echoes strong
Of their great Creator's song.

When the time had fully come,
Broke into the world thy Son,
Born of Mary, born to end
Death's dark reign, our hearts to mend.
Sent into our world to die,
Now he lives and reigns on high.

Still thy Holy Spirit binds
Broken hearts and souls and minds,
Binds thy Church throughout all time,
Binds thy saints in light sublime
Till, with life renewed, shall we
All thy heav'nly glories see.

Gospel ..... Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Thus to glory God did raise him,
Granted him the highest name,
That all creatures now may praise him,
Call him Lord and tell his fame.
At the name of JESUS now
Let all knees in worship bow!

Homily

A Creedal Hymn ..... Melody: Gethsemane

Through chaotic darkness broke
Thine own voice, and light awoke.
Summoned by thy Word alone,
Earth thy footstool, heav'n thy throne,
Still resound with echoes strong
Of their great Creator's song.

When the time had fully come,
Broke into the world thy Son,
Born of Mary, born to end
Death's dark reign, our hearts to mend.
Sent into our world to die,
Now he lives and reigns on high.

Still thy Holy Spirit binds
Broken hearts and souls and minds,
Binds thy Church throughout all time,
Binds thy saints in light sublime
Till, with life renewed, shall we
All thy heav'nly glories see.

Prayers

Offering

The Service continues with the celebration of Holy Communion or with a hymn and The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Closing Hymn ..... Melody: O God Our Help

The mercy of the Lord adore,
Christ's great compassion see;
Our sins upon the cross he bore
That we might righteous be.

His body broken, blood outpoured
Becomes a token sure;
The loving kindness of the Lord
Forever shall endure.

Although the grave that beckons me
Shall turn me back to dust,
Yet in my flesh my God I'll see
In whom I place my trust.

No care my confidence can drown;
My gracious God forgives!
No grave can keep this body down,
For my Redeemer lives!

This **Ash Wednesday Service** was written by Arden W. Mead; creedal hymn by Peter J. Mead. Cover Photo by Gene Plaisted. © Copyright 1995 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

BY-B

"THOUGH THIS BODY BE DESTROYED, YET IN MY FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD"

—A SERVICE FOR ASH WEDNESDAY—

Opening Hymn

Confession of Sins ..... Spoken Responsively

"You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God!

Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

O God our Creator, we confess that we have not honored you with our bodies. Our feet are quick to walk the ways of wickedness. Our hands are eager to grasp and keep what is not truly ours. Our eyes are open to opportunity for every kind of evil. Our ears give heed to rumors, gossip, false witness and lies. We open our mouths to speak evil, and close them when we ought to speak. And from our hearts come all manner of evil intentions. Who shall deliver us from this body of death?

"You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God!

Ash Wednesday Hymn ..... Melody: O Sacred Head

Remember, earth-born mortal,
The dust from which you came,
And know that life's last portal
Returns you to the same!
Let ashes tell the story,
From dust its lesson learn:
Beyond life's fleeting glory
To dust you shall return!

Like flow'rs cast in the furnace,
Our lives are quickly spent.
To dust, O God, you turn us
And call us to repent:
"Turn back, O mortals, grieving
O'er your iniquity,
That, steadfast love receiving,
You may my mercy see."

The Prayer of the Day

O God, you once did fashion
Our lives from earth's frail dust.
Through Jesus' Cross and Passion
Help us your grace to trust.
For Christ was born of Mary
Our mortal dust to share,
Our sin and guilt to carry,
Our ransom to prepare.

Let ashes be the token
Of heartfelt penitence
And of your promise spoken
To raise our bodies hence.
Have mercy on us mortals!
Let faith within us burn,
That even from death's portals
We may to life return!

The Imposition of Ashes

If part of this service may take place here.

First Lesson ..... Joel 2:12-19

Psalmody, from Psalm 51 ..... Melody: Gethsemane

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

Cleanse my heart, O God, from sin;
Make my spirit pure within.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Let your Holy Spirit be
My companion constantly.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight. So you are right in judging me; you are justified in condemning me.

Fill my life once more with praise;
I will serve you all my days.

I have been evil from the day I was born, a sinner from my mother's womb. Sincerity and truth are what you require; fill my mind with your wisdom.

Cleanse my heart, O God, from sin;
Make my spirit pure within.

Let me hear of joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Let my tongue its skill employ
To proclaim your saving joy.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

In your mercy pity me;
From transgression set me free.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cleanse my heart, O God, from sin;
Make my spirit pure within.

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Let your Holy Spirit be
My companion constantly.

Give me the joy of your saving help again, and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Let my tongue its skill employ
To proclaim your saving joy.

Second Lesson ..... 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:2

Lenten Response ..... Melody: Consolation

Christ, himself for us abasing,
Gave his life upon the cross,
Ever humble, all-effacing,
For us counted all things loss,
Unto death God's will obeyed,
For our sakes a servant made.

A Creedal Hymn ..... Melody: Gethsemane

Through chaotic darkness broke thine own voice, and light awoke.
Summoned by thy Word alone, earth thy footstool, heav'n thy throne,
Still resound with echoes strong of their great Creator's song.

When the time had fully come, broke into the world thy Son,
Born of Mary, born to end death's dark reign, our hearts to mend.
Sent into our world to die, now he lives and reigns on high.

Still thy Holy Spirit binds broken hearts and souls and minds,
Binds thy Church throughout all time, binds thy saints in light sublime
Till, with life renewed, shall we all thy heav'nly glories see.

Offering

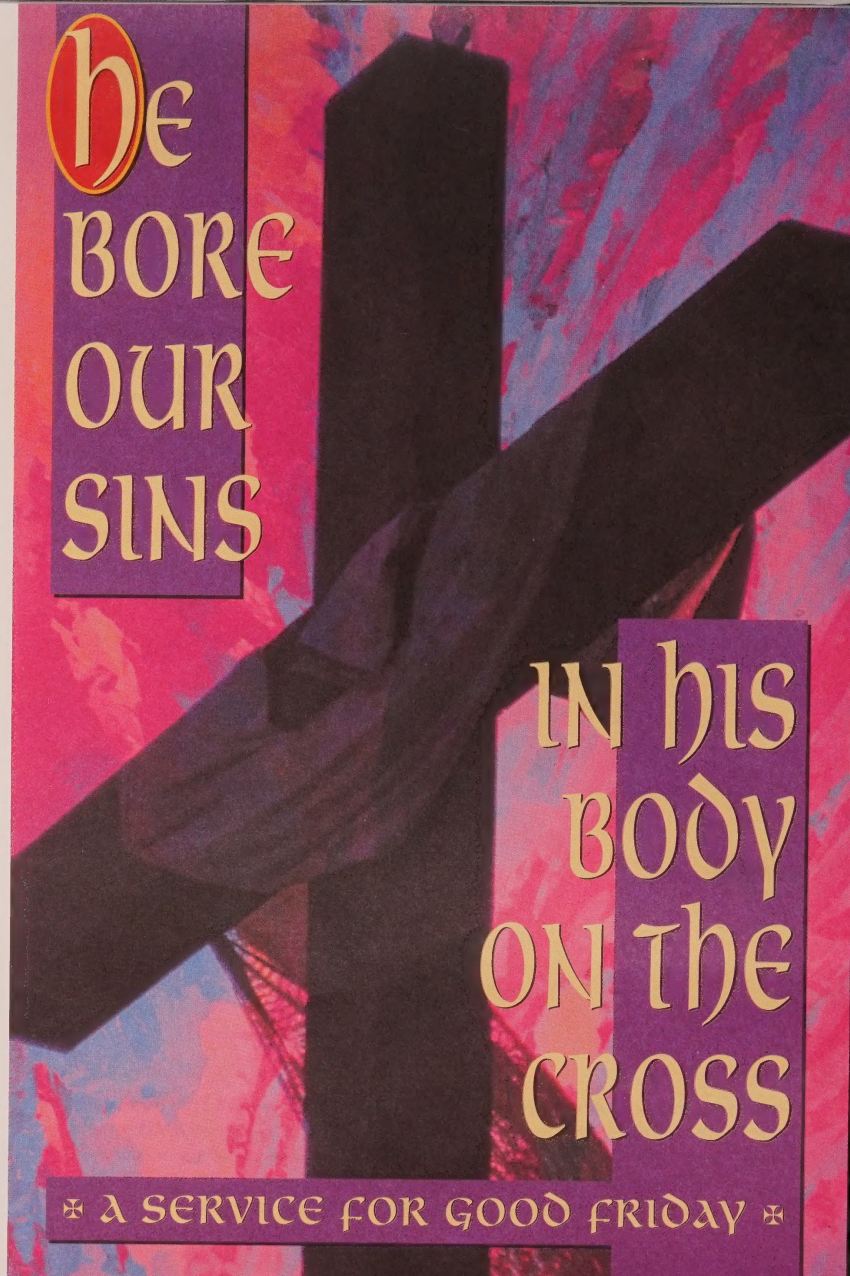
Good Friday Prayer ..... portions of Psalm 22, responsively

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
I have cried desperately for help, but still it does not come. During the day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer; I call at night, but get no rest.
But you are enthroned as the Holy One, the one whom Israel praises.
Our ancestors put their trust in you; they trusted you, and you saved them. They called to you and escaped from danger; they trusted you and were not disappointed.
But I am no longer human; I am a worm, despised and scorned by everyone.
All who see me make fun of me; they stick out their tongues and shake their heads. "You relied on the Lord," they say. "Why doesn't he save you? If the Lord likes you, why doesn't he help you?"
My strength is gone, gone like water spilled on the ground.
All my bones are out of joint; my heart is like melted wax. My throat is as dry as dust, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
It was you who brought me safely through birth; when I was a baby, you kept me safe.
I have relied on you since the day I was born, and you have always been my God. Do not stay away from me! Trouble is near, and there is no one to help. Come quickly to my rescue!
I will tell my people what you have done; I will praise you in their assembly:
"Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord! Worship him and honor him! For he does not neglect the poor or ignore their suffering. He does not turn away from them, but answers when they call for help."
All nations will remember the Lord.
From every part of the world they will turn to him; all races will worship him. Future generations will serve him; people will speak of the Lord to the coming generation. Those not yet born will be told: "The Lord saved his people!"

A Closing Stanza ..... from "Abide with Me"

Lord, hold your cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

This **Good Friday Service** was written by Arden W. Mead; creedal hymn by Peter J. Mead. Cover Photo by Gene Plaisted. © Copyright 1995 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.
BY-F



He Bore Our Sins In His Body On The Cross

✠ A Service for Good Friday ✠

"HE BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS"

—A SERVICE FOR GOOD FRIDAY—

A PROPHETIC WORD ..... ISAIAH 52:13-15

PSALM 51 ..... MELODY: GETHSEMANE

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

Cleanse my heart, O God, from sin;
Make my spirit pure within.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Let your Holy Spirit be
My companion constantly.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight. So you are right in judging me; you are justified in condemning me.

Fill my life once more with praise;
I will serve you all my days.

I have been evil from the day I was born, a sinner from my mother's womb. Sincerity and truth are what you require; fill my mind with your wisdom.

Cleanse my heart, O God, from sin;
Make my spirit pure within.

Let me hear of joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Let my tongue its skill employ
To proclaim your saving joy.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

In your mercy pity me;
From transgression set me free.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cleanse my heart, O God, from sin;
Make my spirit pure within.

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Let your Holy Spirit be
My companion constantly.

Give me the joy of your saving help again, and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Let my tongue its skill employ
To proclaim your saving joy.

THE LORD'S PRAYER IS WHISPERED

ISAIAH 53:1-12 ..... STANZAS MELODY: O GOD OUR HELP

Who would have believed what we now report? Who could have seen the Lord's hand in this?
It was the will of the Lord that his servant grow like a plant taking root in dry ground.
He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of him. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him.
We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain.
No one would even look at him—we ignored him as if he were nothing.

The mercy of the Lord adore, Christ's great compassion see;
Our sins upon the cross he bore that we might righteous be.

He endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain we should have borne.
All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God.
But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did.
We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.
All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going our own way.
But the Lord made the punishment fall on him,
the punishment all of us deserved.

His body broken, blood outpoured becomes a token sure;
The loving kindness of the Lord forever shall endure.

He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;
he never said a word.
Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared,
he never said a word.
He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die,
and no one cared about his fate.
He was put to death for the sins of our people.
He was placed in a grave with evil men, he was buried with the rich,
even though he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie.

Although the grave that beckons me shall turn me back to dust,
Yet in my flesh my God I'll see in whom I place my trust.

It was the will of the Lord that he should suffer. His death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness.
And so he will see his descendants. He will live a long life, and through him the Lord's purposes will succeed.
After a life of suffering, he will again have joy. He will know that he did not suffer in vain.
My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for his sake they will be forgiven.
And so I will give him a place of honor, a place among the great and powerful.
He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of the evil.
He took the place of many sinners and prayed that they might be forgiven.

No care my confidence can drown; my gracious God forgives!
No grave can keep this body down, for my Redeemer lives!

EPISTLE ..... HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5:7-9

VERSE ..... MELODY: ABIDE WITH ME

Unto the Lord with broken hearts return.
Turn from your sins, and true repentance learn.
Grace and compassion flow from heav'n above,
For God is slow to anger, filled with love.

GOSPEL ..... JOHN 18:28—19:30

A HYMN ✠ HOMILY

"NO GRAVE CAN KEEP THIS BODY DOWN!"

—AN EASTER SERVICE—

A New Beginning ..... Crown Him With Many Crowns

Dawn quiet … still grief … incredible sorrow.
The Son of Man lies dead, killed by human greed and fear.
Cool morning sun … awakening life.
The garden is now Christ's home, the tomb his dwelling.
The guards stir, the sun climbs the sky, and life begins again.
Jesus lies in sleep this third day since his death.
It is life that shatters the peace! Blinding light! Incredible energy!
Frantic guards run in fear from the face of God.
Angels! Brilliance! God's power made manifest!
The stone is moved! The body is gone!
The impossible becomes reality!
Life conquers death!
Loving friends come to the garden to offer final farewells.
A familiar hand reaches out again. A loving voice says, "I am here. Know me!"
Oh, my Lord Jesus, it is you!
The Lord is risen indeed!
Incredible joy! Supernal wonder! God's Son is alive again!
No grave can keep this body down! Alleluia!

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne!
Hark, how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing, who died and rose on high,
Who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die!

Alleluia!
That is our song.
Alleluia!
That is our cry.
The Lord is risen!
He is risen indeed!
The universe shakes.
The heavens open.
The world is turned around.
The old order is ripped apart.
Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!
Alleluia!
That is our song.
Alleluia!
That is our cry.
Alleluia!

A Hymn

The Prayer of the Day

The First Lesson

Psalmody from Psalm 118 ..... Stanza Melody: O God Our Help

On this day the Lord acted; let us rejoice and be glad in it! The stone which the builders rejected turned out to be the most important of all.

The mercy of the Lord adore,
Christ's great compassion see;
Our sins upon the cross he bore
That we might righteous be.

Let the people of God and all who gather to worship God proclaim: "His steadfast love endures forever!"

Christ's body broken, blood outpoured
Becomes a token sure;
The loving kindness of the Lord
Forever shall endure.

Listen to the glad shouts of victory in the tents of God's people: "The Lord's mighty power has done it! His power has brought us victory, his mighty power in battle!"

Although the grave that beckons me
Shall turn me back to dust,
Yet in my flesh my God I'll see
In whom I place my trust.

I shall not die but live, and recount the deeds of the Lord!

No care my confidence can drown;
My gracious God forgives!
No grave can keep this body down,
For my Redeemer lives!

The Second Lesson

Alleluia Verse ..... Melody: Diademata

Christ from the dead is raised! The reign of death is o'er!
With alleluias now be praised the Lord forevermore!
Let joyful anthems drown all sorrows, doubts and fears.
No grave can keep this body down once Christ, alive, appears!

The Gospel

This is the day God made! Come, let us celebrate!
Let alleluias accolade a victory so great!
Let joyful anthems drown all sorrows, doubts and fears.
No grave can keep this body down once Christ, alive, appears!

Homily

A Creedal Hymn ..... Melody: Fred Til Bod

Through chaotic darkness broke
Thine own voice, and light awoke.
Summoned by thy Word alone,
Earth thy footstool, heav'n thy throne,
Still resound with echoes strong
Of their great Creator's song.

When the time had fully come,
Broke into the world thy Son,
Born of Mary, born to end
Death's dark reign, our hearts to mend.
Sent into our world to die,
Now he lives and reigns on high.

Still thy Holy Spirit binds
Broken hearts and souls and minds,
Binds thy Church throughout all time,
Binds thy saints in light sublime
Till, with life renewed, shall we
All thy heav'nly glories see.

Offering

Prayers

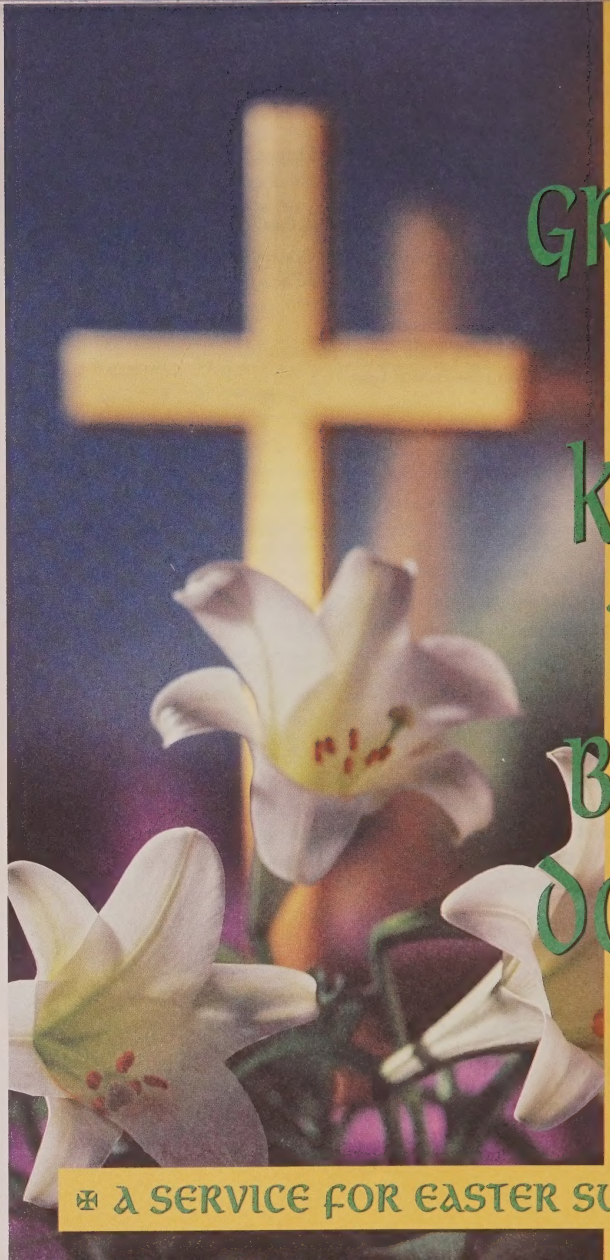
The service continues with a Hymn and the Lord's Prayer or with the celebration of Holy Communion.

A Benediction ..... Spoken Responsively

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Raise your praises high!
With heartfelt thanks we follow Christ, his wondrous love to see.
Alleluia! Christ is risen, nevermore to die!
From death to life we follow Christ, from cross to victory.
Alleluia! Christ is risen! Death's dark reign is done!
God's Holy Spirit guide our steps till life on earth is past.
Alleluia! Christ is risen! Victory is won!
So by God's grace we take our place is paradise at last.

Closing Hymn

This **Easter Service** was written by Arden W. Mead; creedal hymn by Peter J. Mead and *A New Beginning* responses by Lisa A. Frenz. Cover Photo by Fred Sieb. © Copyright 1995 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.
BY-H



No Grave Can Keep This Body Down

✠ A Service for Easter Sunday ✠

Creative
CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PARISH, INC.
10300 Watson Road
St. Louis, MO 63127

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No.
2891
St. Louis, MO

CALL TOLL- FREE
U.S. and CANADA:

1-800-325-9414

TO THE PASTOR:

CONVENANT METROPOLITAN COM CHUF
REV MARGE RAGONA
PO BOX 101473
BIRMINGHAM AL 35210

Creative Communications for the Parish

New Resources for Lent & Easter 1995

LENT - HOLY WEEK - EASTER

WORSHIP SERVICES - BULLETINS - VIDEOS

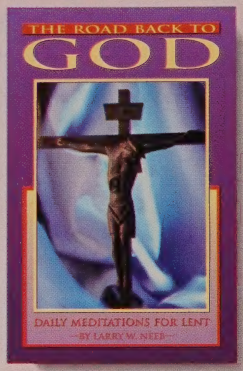
Plus Many More New Ideas for
Worship & Ministry in Your Parish

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PARISH
10300 Watson Road, St. Louis, MO 63127

Lenten Devotional Resources

NEW THIS YEAR!

The Road Back to God



Lent becomes a treasure hunt when we seek a deeper and richer relationship with God. ***The Road Back To God*** is a series of Lenten meditations to help you in your search for God and a faithful relationship with him. The 40 meditations in this booklet help Christians find their way back to the cross as the heart and center of their faith.

These six weeks of devotions are built around six different themes: You Count in God's Eyes, The Meaning of Grace in Our Lives, How to Believe Again, Rediscovering Hope, The Mystery of Suffering, and Holy Week. Each reading is headlined by a **theme** and a **coordinated Scripture reading.** After each reading, a **summary thought** or **prayer** captures the spirit of the reading. These prayer thoughts often include suggestions for concrete action that can build up your spiritual life. Intended to supplement attendance at Sunday worship and other special Lenten services, these meditations are personal, may also also be used in the company of family.Order Code **RG-1** Cost **$.59**/1-199, **$.56**/200-499, **$.52**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+

Letterhead Order Code **RG-3**, Cost: **$7.50**/100, **$30**/500, **$53**/1000

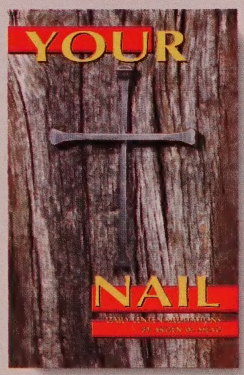
Letterhead Envelope Order Code **LE-X**, Cost: **$5.25**/100, **$22**/500, **$34**/1000

Contribution Envelope Order Code **RG-5**, Cost: **$6.95**/100, **$28**/500, **$50**/1000

6x9 envelope for use with church mailings etc. Order Code **RG-4**, Cost: **$.10**/1-499, **$.09**/500-999, **$.08**/1000+

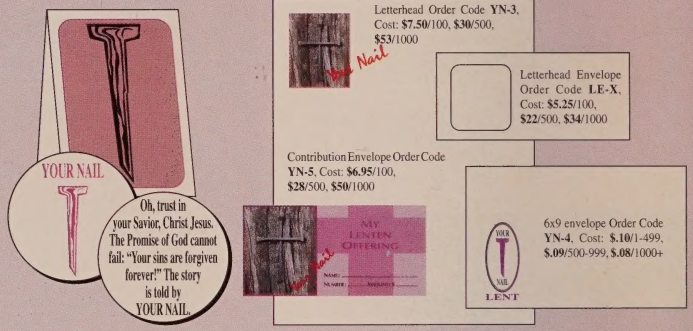
A colorful Table Tent Calendar is available as a visual reminder of the daily Lenten discipline one has undertaken. Order Code **RG-2**, Cost: **$.17**/1-499, **$.16**/500-999, **$.15**/1000+

Your Nail



More than a million copies of this devotional classic have been distributed and used since it was first issued 17 years ago!

Beginning with Ash Wednesday and running through Easter Sunday, the daily devotions in this booklet invite readers to meditate on the meaning of Christ's suffering and death for their own lives. They are encouraged to use *a real nail* as a reminder and help for their meditation. Colossians 2:14-15, which includes the thought that *"God took all the charges that were against us and nailed them to the Cross,"* is the basic text from which all the devotions are derived. Order Code **YN-1** Cost: **$.59**/1-199, **$.56**/200-499, **$.52**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+



Letterhead Order Code **YN-3**, Cost: **$7.50**/100, **$30**/500, **$53**/1000

Letterhead Envelope Order Code **LE-X**, Cost: **$5.25**/100, **$22**/500, **$34**/1000

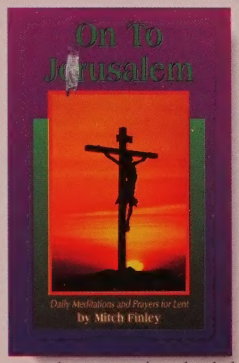
Contribution Envelope Order Code **YN-5**, Cost: **$6.95**/100, **$28**/500, **$50**/1000

6x9 envelope Order Code **YN-4**, Cost: **$.10**/1-499, **$.09**/500-999, **$.08**/1000+

For those who wish, a unique **table tent** is also offered by Creative Communications, die-cut with slots into which a *real nail* may be inserted. (**We do not provide the nails themselves.** We suggest something like a horseshoe nail as looking most "authentic.") Order Code, **YN-2** Cost: **$.17**/1-499, **$.16**/500-999, **$.15**/1000+

A Wooden Medallion, bearing the image of your nail, is also available from Creative Communications. Carried either in your pocket or purse, the medallion can serve as a daily reminder of the focus of your Lenten meditations—your nail. Order Code, **YN-6** Cost: **$.19**/1-99, **$.18**/100-499, **$.16**/500-999, **$.15**/1000-1999, **$.13**/2000+

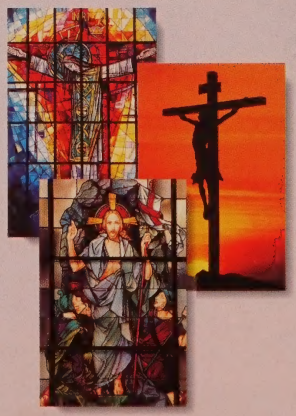
On To Jerusalem



The Gospel of Luke tells us that, "When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). This image of Jesus "resolutely determined"—as another translation has it—to journey toward his rendezvous with destiny is a fitting image for the season of Lent. As we make our own journey to Jerusalem with Jesus this Lent, the daily reflections of *On To Jerusalem* will help us leave behind the "old self," equally determined to put on the "new self," to borrow terms from St. Paul. Each reflection begins with a Scripture passage and concludes with a brief prayer. During Lent we focus on Jesus' call to repent by trying to respond more faithfully to God's gift of grace. The most basic way we "repent," says author Mitch Finley, is to confess our shortcomings and then try to grow in love of God and neighbor. To that end, we embrace exercises that help us "die to the old self"—traditionally, we fast, we share what we have with those who have less, and we give extra time to prayer. Order Code **TJ-1** Cost **$.59**/1-199, **$.56**/200-499, **$.52**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+

Prayer Cards

NEW THIS YEAR!



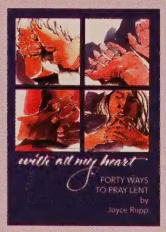
Prayer Cards for Lent and for Easter feature different full-color images on one side and prayers on the other. Attractive and inexpensive, these cards are a good way to encourage Lenten observation and Easter celebration in your parish. Order Code *(Stained Glass Cross-Lent)* **PK-M;** *(Sunset Cross-Lent)* **PK-D;** *(Resurrection-Easter)* **PK-G.** Cost **$4.50**/50, **$7**/100, **$26**/500, **$40**/1000, **$70**/2000

Lenten Prayer Books

With All My Heart

Enriching one's personal prayer is a traditional goal of Lent—and this new book is sure to help readers achieve that goal. For each day of Lent, the book has a clearly worded, down-to-earth reflection on a Christian practice, teaching or truth drawn from a Scripture quote. Each reflection sets the stage for a personal prayer that features a gentle invitation to readers to adopt specific attitudes, bodily postures or symbols to enhance their prayer. Order Code **LG-6.** Cost: **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

NEW THIS YEAR!



Standing Near The Cross

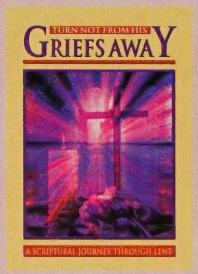
Christians are urged during Lent to examine how they are responding to the call to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. What better resource for this daily Lenten prayer than the Gospel accounts of the passion and death of Jesus? The focus of these soul-seaching, personalized prayers is the responses of the disciples to Jesus. Those responses recorded in the passion accounts can inspire our own prayer because we also are called to be disciples and we want to follow Jesus, yet we also fail and must rely on divine mercy, as they did. The Scripture text for these prayers—one for each day from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday—was selected from one of the four Gospels, and the texts follow in chronological order. Order Code **LG-5**. Cost: **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

Special Lenten Resources

NEW THIS YEAR!

Lenten Bulletin Insert

With our new bulletin insert your worshippers will learn the meanings of the symbols, terms and Scripture lessons for Lent and Easter. Like our 1994 Advent insert, LENT: THE SEASON features an overview of the entire season, a bit of church history, and brief descriptions of the most common terms and symbols. Includes themes from Lent's Scripture lessons and a list of daily readings for Ash Wednesday through Easter. Illustrated in full color. Order Code **LS-1,** Cost: 50/**$4.50**, 100/**$7**, 200/**$12**.



NEW THIS YEAR!

Turn Not From His Griefs Away

A Scriptural Journey to the Cross

Lent is a time of preparation and how better prepare than to relive the Savior's ministry through Scripture readings for each day of Lent? **Turn Not From His Griefs Away** provides a convenient way to review our Lord's career, focusing mainly on the Gospels, and adding commentary by the great prophet of the Savior, Isaiah. Brief comments orient the reader to each day's selection; thought-provoking questions and a prayer conclude the day's meditation. Pocket-size with full color cover. Order Code **MW-Z**, Cost: 5-49/**$.48** each, 50-99/**$.47**, 100-499/**$.46,** 500-999/**$.40**, 1000+/**$.38**

NEW THIS YEAR!

Lenten Calendar

1995 Lenten Calendar builds upon the traditional Lenten practices of worship and meditation. With Scriptural readings and spiritual accents for each day, this is a great reminder of the meaning of Lent. Printed in full color on both sides of an 8.5" x 11" vellum sheet, **this calendar has space for parishes to imprint their schedules for Lent and Holy Week services.** For use in home or office, ideal for bulletin board or refrigerator door. Order Code **DC-9,** Cost: **$10.90**/100, **$42**/500, **$78**/1000.

NEW THIS YEAR!

Biblical Bookmark

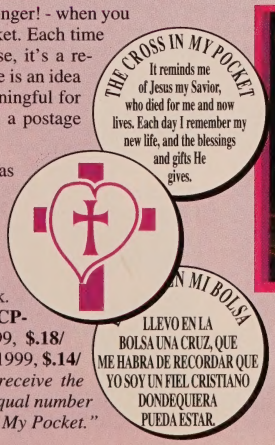
The Sermon on the Mount begins with the word **"Blessed"**—a word the Savior repeats again and again. The daily Bible readings in this Lenten bookmark invite you to ponder the great blessings which are offered you through faith in Jesus Christ. During each week of the Lenten season a single Beatitude is highlighted, and Scripture verses that explore the truth of Jesus' great blessings are suggested—all with the goal that God may bless you in your Lenten meditation … and use you to share God's blessings with others as well. Order Code **BF-7**, Cost **$.12**/1-499 **$.11**/500-999 **$.10**/1000+

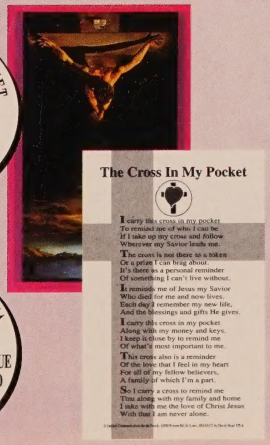
Available in English & Spanish

The Cross in My Pocket

It's like tying a string around your finger! - when you carry this unique cross in your pocket. Each time you reach into your pocket or purse, it's a reminder of the meaning of Lent. Here is an idea that works to make Lent more meaningful for your people...and it costs less than a postage stamp.

• A daily reminder of Lent • Perfect as an enclosure in Lenten mailings • Can be passed out Ash Wednesday or 1st Sunday in Lent • Ideal to coordinate with sermon and bulletin; print a verse of the poem in the bulletin or parish newsletter each week. Order Code **CP-1** English Version, **CP-2** Spanish Version. Cost: **$.19**/1-99, **$.18**/100-499, **$.17**/500-999, **$.16**/1000-1999, **$.14**/2000+ *Note: For this cost you receive the special wooden medallion and an equal number of the cards entitled, "The Cross in My Pocket."*





Also available, finely crafted **metal** crosses, beautiful silver or bronze colors with the inscription, "God Loves You" embossed on the cross. With each cross you receive a copy of the poem, "I Carry This Cross in My Pocket." Cost: **$.25**/1-99, **$.23**/100-499, **$.21**/500-999, **$.19**/1000-1999, **$.16**/2000+. Order Code **CP-S** (Silver Cross), **CP-G** (Bronze Cross).

Lenten Coin Folder and Coin Boxes

Many parishes find Lent the ideal time to ask for a special gift. Illustrated beautifully for Lent, this coin holder invites Christians to set aside a quarter a day and thus $10 during the forty days of Lent. A special slot makes possible an additional check or currency offering. The back cover has space for the contributor's name and offering envelope number. Folds to 4"x 6 1/8" to fit in a standard envelope. Order Code **LC-F**, Cost: **$.33**/1-99, **$.31**/100-499, **$.29**/500+ Envelope for coin holder, Order Code **EN-V**, cost: **$4**/50, **$6**/100, **$20**/500

This Lent Offering Box is an ideal way to remind the members of your parish that Lent is a time for sacrificial giving. Illustrated with the theme,"Christ Died for All," the box folds so that it is easily mailable in a #10 envelope (**Order Code LT-C**). An Offering Box for year around use is also available (Order Code **CB-U**). The boxes measure 2 1/2" x 1 5/8" x 3 3/4". Cost: **$.33**/1-99, **$.31**/100-499, **$.29**/500+

Lenten Litanies

NEW THIS YEAR!

God's Grace and Mercy Still Abound is a set of six responsive litanies emphasizing themes from the Series C Scriptures for the Sundays in Lent as well as the opening (title) lines of the tradtional Lenten Introits (which may, for effect, be spoken by another voice from the balcony or the midst of the congregation). Responses are sung to the familiar tune *Rhosymedre*; music is provided with each order. If desired, they may be used as the entire opening liturgy for the Sundays in Lent. Order Code **TC-9** for the entire series of six litanies. Cost **$.25**/1-499 (sets), $.**19**/ 500-999 (sets), **$.16**/1000+ (sets)

Lord Jesus, Lead the Way is a series of six responsive litanies, each containing five hymn stanzas for the congregation to sing to the familiar Lenten tune *Southwell*. These are interspersed with spoken lines from the Series C Scriptures for the day as well as the historic Lenten Introit Antiphon. These litanies may serve as part or all of the opening liturgy for Lenten Sunday services. A responsive benediction is also included on each leaflet. Music for the organist is provided with each order. Order Code **TC-6** for the entire series of six litanies. Cost **$.25**/1-499 (sets), **$.19**/ 500-999 (sets), **$.16**/1000+ (sets)

Lenten Bible Studies

Holy Masquerade

A Six-Part Study for Lent

Holy Masquerade, a brief novel by world famous author Olav Hartman is the basis for a study of important Lenten themes: faith and doubt. Each week participants read a brief portion of the 140 page book. When participants gather, their reading is placed into the context of selections from Scripture. Student study guides lead them through a discussion about the meaning of faith, especially in the life of the church.

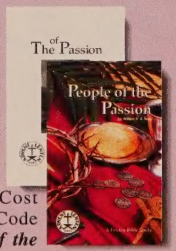
Holy Masquerade unfolds during the weeks of Lent and the book's chapters bear the old Latin names the church assigned for those weeks. Armed with her pagan honesty, Mrs. Svenson, the minister's wife, sets out to test the quality and depth of her husband's faith and that of his flock. In the process she—and the reader—become aware of her deep craving for faith. Readers are asked to read no further than their brief weekly assignments so as to preserve the surprise ending.

Cost: Copies of the 140 page paperback book, ***Holy Masquerade*** (books can be shared) 1-10 @**$2.95**, 10+ **$2.50**. Order Code **HM-5**, Leader's Guide **$2.95**, @Order Code **HM-8**, Student Guide @**$1.95**, Order Code **HM-9**

People of the Passion

A Six-Week Lenten Bible Study

How many times have the members of your congregation heard the Passion story? Each Lent they reflect on the awesome events surrounding Christ's death and resurrection. This year help them see the Passion through the eyes of those who were there long ago. *People of the Passion* follows Series C (ILCW) and features the Gospel of Luke. Participants hear the readings in church, reflect on them, and then gain greater insight as they share them in a weekly group study.



People of the Passion **Student Guide** Cost **$2.75**, Order Code **PA-1**; ***People of the Passion*** **Leader's Guide**, Cost **$2.75**, Order Code **PA-2**

NEW THIS YEAR!

For Your Lenten Bible Study

Church Year Bible Studies: Lent-Easter-Ascension-Pentecost

This study guide is for those who wish to examine in-depth the Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel lessons appointed in Series C for each Sunday, plus festival days. Every session will help lay people understand the lectionary, become familiar with its readings, discover a common theme from each Sunday's lessons and apply it to their lives. Book 2 covers **Lent-Easter-Ascension-Pentecost** (Sunday only) in 17 sessions, so that study begun in Lent may continue in the weeks following. Available Leader's Guide offers how-to and background information for each step of every session. **Study Guide** Order Code **C2-S** Cost: **$5.00; Leader's Guide** Order Code **C2-L** Cost: **$5.00**

Easter Crosses

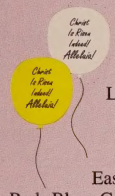
Series Order Code EC-G

An Empty Cross... the fitting touch to Easter celebration. Mailed or brought home from your Easter services these new **Easter Crosses** are a reminder of Christ's victory over death. They work well attached to the refrigerator door, bulletin board...or used as a bookmark. Sold only in groups of 50, with approximately equal numbers of the four crosses. Order Code **EC-A, EC-F**, or **EC-G** Cost: **$6**/50, **$10**/100, **$40**/500, **$70**/1000

Series Order Code EC-F

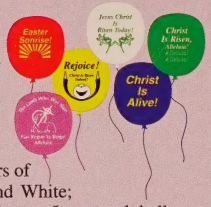
Series Order Code EC-A

Easter Balloons



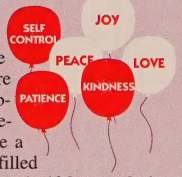
Your people (young and old alike) will love to take these Easter balloons home to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ during the days following Easter.

- **Great for a sunrise service!**
- **Great to decorate the church & school!**
- **Great to take home!**



Easter Balloons may be ordered in four ways: Mixed colors of Red, Blue, Green, Lavender, White and Yellow; Mixed Yellow and White; White only; or Yellow only. Average flying time with helium is **10 hours**. In general, balloons **should not be filled** with helium the night before Easter services. Order Code **EB-5** (mixed colors), Order Code **EB-8** (mixed yellow & white), Order Code **EB-6** (yellow only), Order Code **EB-7** (white only). Balloons are sold only in 50's, Cost: **$8**/50, **$15**/100, **$65**/500, **$110**/1000

Pentecost Balloons



Pentecost balloons provide a memorable illustration and take home gift. In mixed lots, these red and white balloons are emblazoned with the Biblical gifts of the Spirit. Helium certified, they have a flying time after being filled with helium of approximately **10 hours.** Order Code **PB-1.** Cost: **$8**/50, **$15**/100, **$65**/500, **$110**/1000

Easter Litanies

RISEN INDEED! is a series of seven responsive litanies for the Easter Season. Beginning with Easter Sunday and continuing through the Sunday before Pentecost, they denote the ongoing joy and triumph of Eastertide and unite the entire Season with a common format and the repeated use of the familiar melody *I Know That My Redeemer Lives*.

If used following the Opening Hymn (of your own choosing), these litanies may well replace the Invocation and Kyrie in Sunday services for the entire Season. As such, they could well be followed immediately by a Hymn of Praise (such as *This Is the Feast of Victory for Our God*) and the Prayer of the Day. Since each litany uses material from all three cycles of the Lectionary to begin setting a theme for the day, they may be used in any year; their message is universal.

Order Code **RD-1**, Cost: (full set of seven) **$.24**/1-499, **$.19**/500+

Palm Crosses for Palm Sunday

Great for handouts on Palm Sunday!

Must be bought in groups of 50.

African Palm Crosses for Palm Sunday are hand made throughout the year by families in seven mud hut villages in Tanzania, East Africa, to supplement meager incomes. Sales help support community projects such as agricultural and vocational training, schools, community water systems and emergency relief.

These handsome crosses are crafted from dry palm fronds and measure 7.5 to 8.5 inches tall. Perfect for children and adults, the palm crosses are formed with a loop at the top, allowing them to be hung or worn on a cord, as desired. Order Code **PS-9**; Cost: **$8.50**/50, **$15**/100, **$70**/500.

1995 Liturgical Wall Calendar

NEW LOW PRICE! This new **Liturgical Wall Calendar** highlights the seasons and festivals of the church year in colorful symbolic form. It's large 11" x 17" size makes it easy to read, and suitable for hanging on a wall, door, or refrigerator. Each Sunday of the year bears a special symbol depicting the season or festival celebrated that day—a green cross for the Sundays after Pentecost, a purple arrow for Advent, a red dove for Pentecost, a rising sun for Easter, and a purple cross for Lent. Sharing this inexpensive gift shares the liturgical church year with members of your congregation. Order Code **LC-1**, Cost: **$.25** each.

Private Prayers for Public Worship

PRIVATE PRAYERS for Public Worship are printed on narrow cards that may be **placed in pew racks** or used as **hymnal bookmarks**, to encourage and enhance personal preparation and participation in the worship of the church.

Each card contains six prayers for private meditation: • Upon Entering • At the Sermon • At the Offering • Before Communion • After Communion • Before Departing — and the note: "Please leave this card for use at future services."

There are four different cards in this series (therefore four different sets of prayers), each with its own seasonal emphasis and distinctive color and design: *Advent/Christmas* (Order Code **PW-1**) • *Lent* (Order Code **PW-2**) • *Eastertide* (Order Code **PW-3**) • and "*Growing in the Lord*" for non-festival "green seasons" of the Church Year (Order Code **PW-4**).

Cost for each card: **$.11**/25-499, **$.09**/500-999, **$.08**/1000+. Minimum order 25 cards. Order **sets of all four cards**, Order Code **PW-5**, Cost: **$.33**/ 25-499 sets, **$.30**/500-999 sets. Minimum order of the sets is 25.

New Life Worship Cards

Each **New Life Worship Card** by Creative Communications offers a different approach to one portion of your church service. Pass them out on selected Sundays or at special services. **The cards are reusable.**

• Variety for worship services • New congregational responses • Make Lent/Easter services special

Lent—"Behold the Lamb!" Lenten hymns shape this setting for Communion. Catch Lent's Spirit. Code **WC-8**
Easter-Pentecost—"Alleluia!" Make Easter and Pentecost seasons special. Great Easter tunes. Code **WC-5**
Easter-Pentecost—"Joyful, Joyful!" For Holy Communion this card employs cheerful melodies. Code **W-12**
All Year—"Father Forgive" For Lent or all year. A responsive confession using the commandments. Code **WC-3**
All Year—The Hope Card An easy to follow Worship Card for funerals that is ideal for small services. Code **W-10**

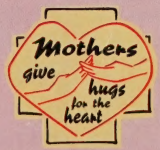
Worship Card Prices: 1-499 @ **$.15**, 500-999 @ **$.14**, 1000+ @ **$.11. Order any three worship cards at reduced prices:** 1-499 sets of three @ **$.33** per set, 500-999 sets of three @ **$.30** per set, 1000+ sets of three @ **$.22** per set. Music and instructions for the pastor are provided as needed with each order.

Mother's Day Handout

NEW THIS YEAR!

Here's the ideal handout for Mother's Day. Inexpensive-and it will be appreciated, either the parish or the children can present these colorful lapel pins (1" square) and bookmarks (2.5" x 7") to their mothers as part of your Sunday morning activities. Included with each order are two support pieces to help you incorporate this unique handout into the service. You'll receive a Mother's Day children's message and a reproducible litany showing how Christian mothers can be an example of God's love.

Order Code **MF-A**, Cost: **$.69**/1-99, **$.62**/100-499, **$.59**/500-999, **$.49**/1000+.



Actual Size

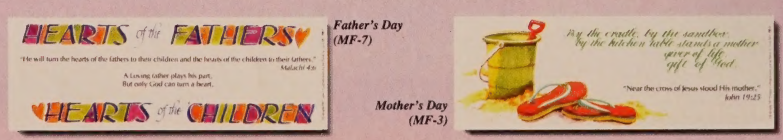
Mother's & Father's Day Bookmark Handouts

Colorful and catchy...these special bookmarks serve as a practical reminder that Mothers and Fathers are a gift from God. These bookmarks with their Scriptural quotations serve as an ongoing reminder that God blesses families. You receive an approximately equal number of each of the four bookmarks for either Mother's or Father's Day.

Order Code **MF-M** (Mother's Day **set of four**), **MF-D** (Father's Day **set of four**), Cost: **$6**/50 (12+ of each card), **$10**/100 (25 of each card), **$32**/400 (100 of each card).

Cards may also be purchased separately. Cost: **$.12**/1-49, **$.10**/ 50-399, **$.08**/400+

Father's Day (MF-8) *Father's Day (MF-6)* *Father's Day (MF-5)* *Mother's Day (MF-4)* *Mother's Day (MF-2)* *Mother's Day (MF-1)*



Father's Day (MF-7)

Mother's Day (MF-3)

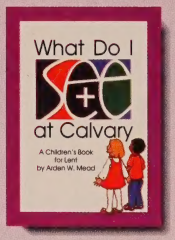
Children's Lenten Devotional Booklets

NEW THIS YEAR!

What Do I See At Calvary?

What Do I See at Calvary? invites children to keep their eyes open throughout their Lenten journey. There are lessons to be learned from so many of the things one can see along the way, from palm branches to Passover, from olive trees to crowing cocks, from thorns and nails to dice and darkness, from a torn curtain to a toppled tombstone.

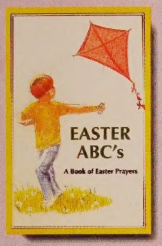
Daily devotions include suggested Scripture readings and personal prayers. And since Sundays are special even in Lent (so the opening devotion instructs), on Sundays we look ahead to begin glimpsing where the story ends—a garden and a tomb, spices and a shroud, a stone and a seal, and an anxious angel. Order Code **KL-C**, Cost **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+



Little Ways Through Lent

In this little booklet of daily Lenten prayer and devotion, children learn to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' sacrifice by making some small "sacrifices" of their own. Traditional Lenten practices like fasting, praying more and almsgiving are presented to elementary school children in simplified form. Children learn that Lenten activities strengthen the life of faith that comes to us in baptism as we choose once again to be followers of Jesus—even when we are called to make sacrifices of our own. Order Code **KL-B** Cost **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

Easter ABC's

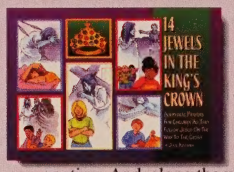


Easter ABC's is an inexpensive 36 page booklet, colorfully illustrated and written for children—that provides twenty-six prayers appropriate for Easter.

Easter ABC's emphasizes that Easter isn't just one day, it's a whole season—a whole new way of life. Ideal as a gift before or after Easter and especially on Easter Sunday for the parish children.

Easter ABC's Order Code **EP-1**, Cost: **$.57**/1-199, **$.54**/200-499, **$.49**/500+

14 Jewels in the King's Crown



In **14 Jewels in the King's Crown** we follow Jesus on his way toward the cross—and to Easter morning. Following the Scripture closely, **14 Jewels** visits Jesus on 14 steps of his long, hard journey from sentencing to the resurrection. And, along the way, children learn ways that they can imitate the loving acts of Jesus in their own lives—through practicing honesty and helpfulness to living joyful, hope-filled lives. A great way to help kids to understand Jesus saving work in his suffering and death—and what we can learn from Jesus sacrifice for our own lives. Order Code **KL-A**. Cost: **$.46**/1-499, **$.40**/500-999, **$.38**/1000+

Children's Resources

Kid's Coin Collector

This coin box helps kids take an interest in supporting the church or a special project . Teaches children that no matter your age, you can help in the Lord's work. Cost: **$.33**/**1-99**, **$.31**/100-499, **$.29**/500+. Order Code **KB-A**

Arch®Books for Lent and Easter

From Arch® Books, trusted by generations of Christian parents, come five colorful 24-page paperbacks for the season of Lent/Easter. Aimed at children ages 5 to 9, each sturdy 6"x8" book features a story in rhyme with colorful illustrations.

The Most Wonderful King (Jesus' Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem leads to his suffering, death, resurrection and ascent into heaven). Order Code **CH-B**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.89**; 4+ **$1.49**.

The Bread and the Wine: The Story of the Last Supper (We watch Jesus' celebration of the Last Supper through the eyes of a young boy). Order Code **CH-C**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.89**; 4+ **$1.49**.

Jesus Forgives Peter (We follow Peter from the Last Supper to his repeated denials and the happy ending of Jesus' forgiveness). Order Code **CH-8**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.89**; 4+ **$1.49**.

Good Friday (From Palm Sunday through Easter morning's resurrection we go with our Lord on his most difficult mission—death on the cross). Order Code **CH-A**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.89**; 4+ **$1.49**.

Doubting Thomas (After Jesus called Thomas to follow him, the disciple saw wonders but doubted the greatest miracle of all). Order Code **CH-9**, Cost: 1-3 **$1.89**; 4+ **$1.49**.

Songs Kids Love to Sing

Here are 56 favorite modern Sunday School songs in four convenient formats: teachers' music edition, lyrics only edition, 2 CDs or two cassettes. Designed for the classroom, group gatherings or home, these songs cover a variety of ages and skill levels. A wonderful way to give children Christian values and make Jesus a part of every day. 8 1/2 x 11" teachers' music edition, paperbound, Order Code, **KS-1** Cost **$8.95**; 5 1/2 x 8 1/2" lyrics edition, paper, Order Code **KS-2**, Cost **$1.75**; Double CD album, Order Code **KS-3**, Cost **$19.95**; Double cassette album, Order Code **KS-4**, Cost **$13.95**

Balloons

These colorful balloons add just the right accent to many church, school and Sunday School functions. Catchy slogans, cheerful illustrations highlight the fellowship when Christian children gather for play, study and worship. Order mixed bags of colors and slogans.

Order Code **CB-3**, Cost: **$8**/50, **$15**/100, **$110**/1000. Or, order quantities of each individual balloon, Order Code **CB-4**. Please specify your choice.

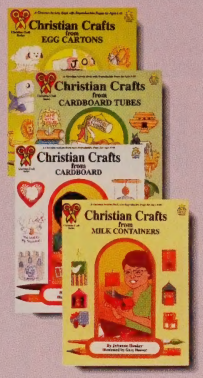
Flying time with helium 10 hours.

Special Kid's Resources and Crafts

Christian Craft Ideas for Children

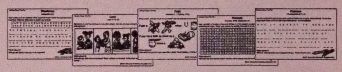
The Christian Craft Series offers 64-page books of Scripture-based crafts for children ages 4-10. Includes materials list, directions and patterns. Cost $**8.95 each**.

Christian Crafts from Egg Cartons contains more than 40 crafts made with colorful, foam egg cartons. Includes Noah's Big Boat, Pharaoh's Chariot, and much more. Uses KJV quotations. Order Code **KB-2. Christian Crafts from Cardboard Tubes** provides parents and teachers of Christian education with a variety of Bible-based crafts using cardboard tubes. Activities illustrate Bible stories and truths taught to children at home or church. Uses NIV quotations. Order **Code KB-3. Christian Crafts from Cardboard** contains an assortment of activities designed to illustrate Bible stories from the Old and New Testaments. Projects range from puppets to plaques and masks to models. Uses NIV quotations. Order Code **KB-4. Christian Crafts from Milk Containers** contains projects to reinforce specific Bible stories, including Daniel in the Lions' Den, Noah's Ark, Chariot of Fire, and Tower of Babel. Uses NIV quotations. Order Code **KB-5**.

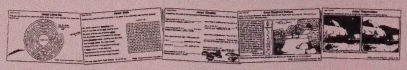


Pew Pads

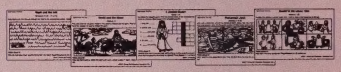
Keep young children (ages 5-8) focused on Bible discovery activities during the church service with **Pew Pads**. Twenty-five pages in each pad offer five different activities. Put them in your pews or hymnal racks. Uses NIV quotations. Cost **$3.50** each.



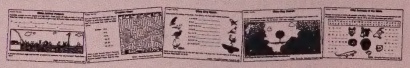
Christian Values – Order Code **PP-1**



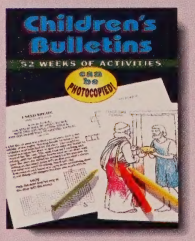
Jesus – Order Code **PP-2**



Bible Heroes – Order Code **PP-3**



Creation – Order Code **PP-4**

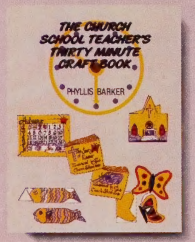


Children's Bulletins

Here is an economical way to provide bulletins for your younger worshippers that offer constructive activities to do during the adult service. **Children's Bulletins** contains 52 weeks of photocopy-ready, double-sided bulletins, each featuring a memorable Bible story. Use these non-lectionary pages any time of the year. Includes short Scripture readings, coloring page, mazes, crossword puzzles, word searches and fill-in-the-blanks. 8 1/2x 11" paperback. Order Code **KB-1**, Cost **$9.95.**

BE SURE TO SEE PAGES 24 & 25 FOR MORE SCHOOL & CHURCH SCHOOL RESOURCES!

The Church School Teacher's Thirty Minute Craft Book

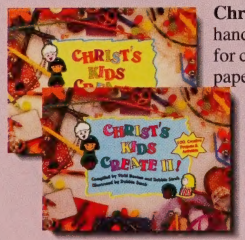


Teachers who want to use crafts in their classes but lack space, equipment, time and budget will want **The Church School Teacher's Thirty Minute Craft Book**. Preschool through sixth-graders can create their own 3-dimensional art: greeting cards, masks, murals, stickers, leaf prints, Advent calendars, stained glass windows and soft sculptures. Order Code **TM-C**, Cost **$4.95**

Journey with Jesus

This 36 page booklet of fun, Bible based activities, games, poems and stories is designed for children to enjoy during summer vacation. A perfect give-away on the last day of school, as a take home gift at VBS, or as a Children's Sermon give-away, **Journey with Jesus** promises to keep youngsters learning Bible Stories at home and on vacation. It ties in with activities that kids enjoy—barbeques, trips, visits to the Zoo and more. Kids read fun poems about Jonah (the Chicken of the Sea), write their own traveling prayers, color pictures, solve crossword puzzles, and play the board game, "Escape from Egypt!" Cost: **$.69**/1-11, **$.49**/12+ Order Code **JJ-1**

Christ's Kids Create I and II

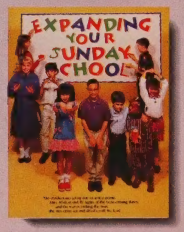


Christ's Kids Create! I and II are two of the handiest compilations of favorite craft projects for children 4 to 14. These 8 1/2" x 11" jumbo paperbacks each include over 100 three-dimensional projects, easy puppets, banners, and things to wear, hang up and give as gifts. And don't miss the list of ideas for creative centers in each volume. A great resource for teachers and parents. **Vol. I**, Order Code **CK-C**. For **Vol. II**, Order Code **CK-D**; Cost each: **$9.95.**

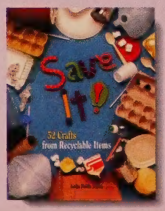
Expanding Your Sunday School

Looking for ways to extend your Sunday School ministry into your congregation and your community? Invest in **Expanding Your Sunday School**, an idea packet that includes samples of various promotional tools (postcard, doorknob hanger, poster) and a leader's guide with practical ideas for recruiting teachers and students and for building enthusiasm for Sunday School.

Packet Order Code **E-SS**, Cost **$7.50, Door Hanger,** Order Code **E-DH**, Cost **$7.25** (pkg. of 100), **Postcard,** Order Code **E-PC**, Cost **$7.25** (pkg. of 100), **Poster,** Order Code **E-PS**, Cost **$.95 each**



Crafts from Recyclable Items



A great craft book for busy teachers and parents, **Save It!** includes a year's worth of ideas for Children's art projects. For ages 4-9, all projects are related to specific Bible stories. Use items otherwise thrown away; food containers, bottles, magazines, cups, etc. These ideas will help you and your young people make better use of God's earth through recycling. 64 pages, 8 1/2 x 11" size. Order Code **KB-9** Cost: **$6.99**

Creation Crafts

A book of craft ideas with a twist, **Creation Crafts** helps children (ages 4-8) learn about ecology and care of God's earth through 32 easy craft projects and activities. Each activity comes with a full-page pattern, using materials from around the house or classroom. Most require tracing or use of a copy machine. These crafts provide colorful decorations while giving kids an appreciation for the beauty and wonder of creation. 64 pages 8 1/2 x11. Paperbound. Order Code **CC-1**; Cost: **$5.99**

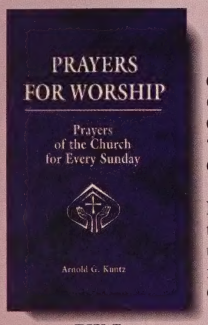
Making Bible Memorization Fun

Bible memorization can be fun for kids with 52 activities like these: collages, decorated place mats, "bowling" for Bible verses and more. Great for Sunday School, day or home school use. For ages 6 to 10. 64 pages, 8 1/2 x11, paperbound. Order Code **MZ-1**; Cost: **$6.99**

My Word
Daily Bible Readings

Every member of your Bible classes should have an opportunity to read *My Word* each day!

My Word is a **new** quarterly pocket-sized magazine from Creative Communications that makes regular Bible reading convenient every day of the year. The readings, taken from the most popular Bible versions, regularly include one of the lessons appointed for the Sunday service to begin the week's readings. Other selections, often under a theme, fill out each week. All readings are accompanied by brief comments to orient the reader to the day's selection, as well as questions or suggestions for mediation and a closing prayer. 112 pages. Individual subscriptions available. Costs are noted in the back of each book. Bulk orders: 5-49/**$.60** each, 50-99/**$.58** each, 1-499/**$.54** each, 500-999/**$.47** each, 1000+/**$.42** each. **Special Introductory Offer:** Churches may place bulk orders for the Jan.-March 1995 issue of My Word, 5 or more copies, at **$.33** each. **For a free sample, check the box on the order form.** Order Code **MW-F**.

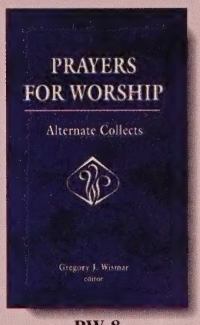


PW-7

Prayers for Worship

Created specifically for use with the three-year lectionary, **Prayers for Worship—Alternative Collects** "seeks to expand the corporate prayer options for the congregation by offering three Collects for each Sunday," one each appropriate for Year A, Year B or Year C. These new prayers "collect...prayer thoughts in anticipation of the proclamation of the Word," specifically in the Gospel lesson. 75 pages. Lies flat in spiral bound format. Order Code **PW-8**; Cost **$8.95** each

Prayers for Worship–Prayers for the Church for Every Sunday presents helpful alternatives to prayers found in the lectionaries. These alternative prayers, usually 325-350 words in length, are unique to each day of the church year, including celebrations/festival days. Most offer opportunity for including the names of members in their petitions. 74 pages. Lies flat in spiral bound format. Order Code **PW-7**; Cost **$8.95** each



PW-8

Lent — a great time for Bible reading

Lent is an ideal time to emphasize studying the Scriptures and to encourage regular Bible reading. Creative is offering two excellent editions, either the New Revised Standard or the New International Version, printed on fine papers, bound in flexible, leather-like bindings with a ribbon marker. Inside, self-study features abound.

The NIV Bible includes section introductions with line maps, a Fan-Tab™ Thumb Index, and footnotes. Burgundy binding Order Code **NI-R**. White binding Order Code **NI-W**. Black binding Order Code **NI-B**. Cost **$17.95.**

The NRSV Bible includes not only general introductions to each book but also the introductions written by Martin Luther, plus cross-references, Christ's words in red, and gilt edging. Burgundy binding Order Code **SV-R**. White binding Order Code **SV-W**. Black binding Order Code **SV-B**. *Regularly $29.95.* **Now at Special price: $19.95.**

NEW THIS YEAR!

Special Offers to Parishes:
1) Order any quantity of these Bibles, offer them to your members and you may *return unsold copies to Creative for full refund up to six months after receiving shipment.*

2) Order now and receive *free* prepared **paragraphs for your bulletin** or newsletter, promoting regular Bible reading and describing the Bible(s) you order for sale to members.

3) Also available at no cost are cards to include in a church mailing to each of your households, promoting Bible reading and the Bible(s) you order for sale to members. Order Code **SV-X**.

Jesus of Nazareth Video Study Program & Services

Bible Study

• **God's Love In Jesus of Nazareth** is a new **6-part Lenten Bible study**. Included is a detailed Leader's Guide (paper, 40 pgs.) and 12 copies of student work sheets for each session. 25 minutes of video provide an integral part of each session in this exciting series. From Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his glorious resurrection, the video drama and genuine Bible study provide an ideal Lenten growth opportunity. Code **JV-3** Cost **$19.95**

SAVE WITH A SPECIAL COMBINATION!
• **God's Love in Jesus of Nazareth Leader's Guide**, 12 copies of each session study questions for participants plus complete 3-cassette *Jesus of Nazareth* video. Code **JV-5** Cost **$69.95**

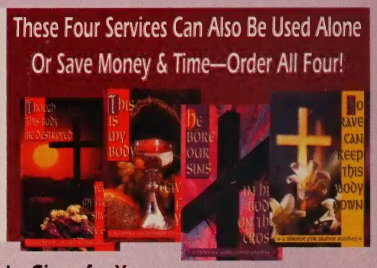
Lenten Worship Services

• **Six Lenten Worship Services** built around 25 minute episodes from *Jesus of Nazareth* use the video as the sermon. Colorful worship folders provide complete services with responsive readings, prayers, hymns and a Gospel lesson suited for each service. Perfect for a gathering at church or at home. Each order includes free worship leader's notes. **Pre-printed bulletins** in sets of 50 for each of 6 sessions. Code **JV-P** Cost: **$29**; 100 for each of 6 sessions, **$48**

*Note: Churches who have **Jesus of Nazareth** need order only the study or worship materials.*

Jesus of Nazareth is a highly acclaimed film portrayal of the life of Christ (3 tapes, 371 min., VHS) Code **V-45** Cost: **$59.95**

Here are four services that can be ordered and used individually—**each one is complete in itself**, or, if used *in combination*, they will for a unified Lenten program. For example, the confession of sins that begins the **Ash Wednesday** service, *Though This Body Be Destroyed, Yet in My Flesh I Shall See God,* is repeated and absolved in the **Maundy Thursday** liturgy, *This Is My Body, Given for You*, and that absolution anticipates the theme of the **Good Friday** service, *He Bore Our Sins in His Body on the Cross*. The **Easter Sunday** worship carries the "body" theme to its glorious conclusion, *No Grave Can Keep This Body Down!* All four services share a new hymned setting of the creed as well as a theme hymn especially for these services. Kits for each service are sold individually. Each kit contains: • leader's guides and music • a sermon study • 50 printed worship folders. Or purchase all four kits at a special combination price. All four kits Order Code, **BY-J**. Cost: **$49.95**



NEW THIS YEAR!

Though This Body Be Destroyed, Yet in My Flesh I Shall See God.

This Ash Wednesday service can be used alone, or coordianted with other Lenten services (see above). It sets the tone for the season by introducing such Lenten melodies as *O Sacred Head, Gethsemane* and *Consolation,* and allows the options of Imposition of Ashes and/or Holy Communion. Kits include leader's guide and music, 50 copies of the bulletin, and a sermon study. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **BY-A.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **BY-B.** Copyright Release Order Code **BY-W**, Cost: $10.

This Is My Body, Given for You

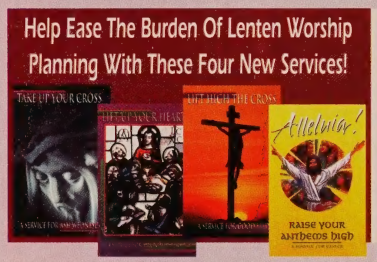
This service for Maundy Thursday can be used alone, or coordianted with other Lenten services (see above). After a unique order of confession and forgiveness, the service offers parts of the liturgy set to the melody *Ebvenezer* and the eucharistic chants to the melody *Hamburg*—all a solemn yet moving setting for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Kits include leader's guide and music, 50 copies of the bulletin, and a sermon study. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **BY-C.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **BY-D.** Copyright Release Order Code **BY-X**, Cost: $10.

He Bore Our Sins in His Body on the Cross

This service for Good Friday can be used alone, or coordianted with other Lenten services (see above). The solemn liturgy begins with the confession of Psalm 51 (responses to the melody *Gethsemane*) and features an interactive reading of Isaiah 53. The closing prayer is from Psalm 22, "Why have you forsaken me?" Kits include leader's guide and music, 50 copies of the bulletin, and a sermon study. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **BY-E.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **BY-F.** Copyright Release Order Code **BY-Y**, Cost: $10.

No Grave Can Keep This Body Down

This service for Easter Sunday can be used alone, or coordianted with the Lenten services (see above). Ideal for Easter sunrise or later Easter morning, it begins with a dramatic responsive reading, "A New Beginning" which leads to the triumphant singing of *Crown Him with Many Crowns,* and a simple service bursting with song … and a most memorable homily. Kits include leader's guide and music, 50 copies of the bulletin, and sermon. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **BY-G.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **BY-H.** Copyright Release Order Code **BY-Z**, Cost: $10.



Here are four services that can be ordered and used individually—**each one is complete in itself,** or, if used *in combination*, they will form a unified Lent program. For example, the same hymn stanzas used in the confessing of Psalm 51 in the **Ash Wednesday** service *Take Up Your Cross* are repeated—but with different spoken responses—in the **Maundy Thursday** service *Lift Up Your Hearts.* Both the **Good Friday** service *Lift High the Cross* and the **Easter Sunday** service *Raise Your Praises High* also begin with appointed Psalm verses interspersed with appropriate hymn stanzas. All four services employ the same hymned setting of the Creed, and the closing hymn and Benediction are related.

Kits for each service are sold individually. Each kit contains: • leader's guide and music • homily by Professor Andrew M. Weyermann • 50 printed worship folders. Or purchase all four kits at a special combination price. All four kits Order Code, **LU-J**. Cost: **$49.95**

Take Up Your Cross

This service for Ash Wednesday can be used alone, or coordinated with the other Lenten services (see above). Employing the traditional readings appointed for the day interspersed with stanzas of the hymn *'Take Up Your Cross' The Savior Said*, this service allows the options of Imposition of Ashes and/or Holy Communion. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily by Andrew Weyermann. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-A.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-B.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-W**, Cost: $10.

Lift Up Your Hearts

This service for Maundy Thursday can be used alone, or coordinated with the other Lenten services (see above). The service begins with a dramatic confession and absolution with hymn stanzas ending *O God, be merciful to me.* Scripture readings (to be chosen locally) are surrounded by other hymn stanzas that repeat the theme. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily by Professor Andrew Weyermann. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-C.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-D.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-X**, Cost: $10.

Lift High The Cross

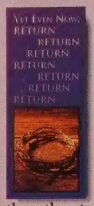
This service for Good Friday - can be used alone, or coordinated with the other Lenten services (see above). This solemn service begins with the praying of Ps.22 (perhaps from the rear of the church) interspersed with the striking stanzas of *Upon the Cross Extended*. Traditional readings from Is.53 and John 19 take the congregation to the foot of the cross. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily by Professor Andrew Weyermann. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-E.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-F.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-Y**, Cost: $10.

Raise Your Anthems High

This service for Easter- can be used alone, or coordinated with the Lenten services (see above). Ideal for use as a sunrise service or later on Easter morning, this simple order of worship overflows with triumphant praise, beginning with traditional shouts from Ps.118 and continuing through appointed readings for the day—all surrounded by exultant hymn stanzas. Kits include 50 copies of the bulletin, music, and homily by Professor Andrew Weyermann. Cost: **$14.95**, Order Code, **LU-G.** Additional bulletins cost **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **LU-H.** Copyright Release Order Code **LU-Z**, Cost: $10.

More Lenten Services

Ash Wednesday



Yet Even Now, RETURN provides a simple order of service for Ash Wednesday. Traditional Scriptures are offered responsively—the Epistle as a call to worship, the Joel 2 Lesson and Psalm 51 conflated as a confession. Two newly written hymns are included, one on the "you are dust" theme to the tune of *O Sacred Head*, the other to any LM melody. Order Code **AS-H** Cost: **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200. Copyright release **$5,** Order Code **CR-6.**

Palm Sunday

Walk With Him is a fresh approach for those who begin Palm Sunday worship with a processional. Words to the traditional hymn *All Glory, Laud, and Honor* are conveniently included. Since it is customary to omit the benediction during Holy Week, an alternate dialog for concluding the service is also included. Order Code **WL-6**: Cost **$4**/50, **$6**/100. Copyright release **$5**; Order Code **CR-8**.

Series C Gospel for the Sunday of the Passion—Palm Sunday

Luke 23:1-49 (RSV) is scripted for dramatic reading, possibly by the choir (reading for a change), or by the congregation. Eight solo readers are involved. Thirteen additional scripts are provided for others who help serve as the "crowd." Cost complete, 20 scripts and instructions for the leader: **$9**. Order Code **PG-9.** Extra scripts for congregational participation may be ordered. Cost **$19**/100, Order Code **PG-X**

Good Friday

Tenebrae—The traditional Tenebrae service is moving and dramatic, but can be complicated—especially for small congregations. **Tenebrae** captures the depth of the traditional Good Friday service in a simple format. **Readings** (TEV translation) **& instructions** included for this dramatic service of darkness. Cost **$11.95** for the Leader's Guide, readings and 50 bulletins. Order Code **TB-K.** Extra bulletins, Order Code **TB-B**, Cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100.

Good Friday

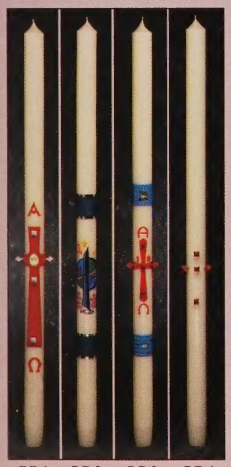
In the Darkness -LIGHT A Good Friday service of darkness (tenebrae) in which the congregation participates with candles. Kits include: Pastor/Participant's Manual • Multiple copies of the readings & homily • 50 copies of the pre-printed service folders • 50 4"x 1/2" congregational candles & drip protectors. Order Code **SD-1.** Cost of Kit **$19.95.** Without candles cost is **$11.95.** Order Code **SD-C.** Additional pre-printed bulletins **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200. Order Code **SD-2**. Blank bulletins for **"In the Darkness -LIGHT"** Order Code **SD-3 $7.25**/100, **$28**/500. Additional candles and bobeches @ **$.16** each Order Code **CL-1.**

Easter Vigil

This Is The Night! is a modern Easter Vigil service for Holy Saturday involving the images of fire and water and following the traditional four-part outline: **1)** *From Darkness to Light* **2)** *From Bondage to Freedom* **3)** *From Death to Life* **4)** *From Promise to Fulfillment.* Printed bulletins include all hymns and readings for the congregation. Kits include 50 pre-printed bulletins, extensive Notes for Worship Leaders, copies of the readings, and music. Cost of Kit: **$14.95**, Order Code **EV-6**. Extra bulletins **$9.90**/100, **$18**/200, Order Code **EV-E.**

Candles

Pascal Candles



PC-1 PC-2 PC-3 PC-4

Pascal Candles –Now you can order Pascal Candles from Creative Communications. Exquisitely crafted by Emkay Candle in **51% Beeswax** in both raised wax and traditional designs. A set of incense nails is included with each candle. Standard Size 36" x 2". Other sizes upon request.

A) Christ Our Savior Design...beautiful raised wax design in red and gold. White nails are included. Order Code **PC-1,** Cost: **$72.10**.
B) Gloria Design, Order Code **PC-2,** Cost: **$56.15**.
C) Lumen Christi Design, Order Code **PC-3,** Cost: **$56.10**.
D) Plain Design, Order Code **PC-4**, Cost: **$42.75**.

Order Code **CL-E** for 7 refill candles for Tenebrae Service Set. Cost: **$6.20.**

Tenebrae Candles

Tenebrae Service Set— a white seven cup metal holder, and seven lavender straight side 9" tapers. Order Code **CL-D** for full set–cost: **$25.75**.

Easter Vigil Candles

Easter Vigil Kit– thin cierge tapers held by each congregation member for the Easter Vigil Service. Kits contain 100 10" candles and bobeches. Order Code **CL-G**, Cost: **$20.55.**

Christ Candles

Christ Candles–symbolizing the presence of Christ. Ideal for the Easter celebration.

Code **CC-6** 11" x 3"
Cost $18.55

Code **CC-7** 14" x 3"
Cost $18.00

Code **CC-5** 11" x 3"
Cost $26.80
(Raised Wax Design)

Confirmation Candle

Confirmation Candle–Pure white wax candle, 8" X 7/8", decorated with a descending dove. Each candle comes with a presentation box. Order Code **CL-C** Cost: **$3.10** each.

Baptism Candles

My Baptism Candle 9 1/2" white candle with beautiful baptismal font. Order Code **CL-A**, Cost: **$2.20** each, or 50 for **$99.95.**

Baptismal Candle 51% pure beeswax 9" candle with Chi Rho/Dove design. Order Code **CL-B**– Cost: **$2.80** each, or 50 for **$129.**

God's Love Breaks Through! NEW THIS YEAR!

Meet all of your Lenten worship needs with this graphic service series!

"God uses for his glory those people and things that are most perfectly broken." The sermons in this six-part Lenten series take *brokenness* seriously—both the kinds of brokenness in which human beings find themselves because of sin, and the kind of brokenness which God requires for true repentance. Week by week worshippers are assured that **God's Love Breaks Through!**

• **When Hearts Are Broken Tearfully**—based on Psalm 51 • **When Christian Love and Care Break Forth**—as depicted in a bottle of ointment broken for Jesus • **When Pride Is Shattered Shamefully**—Peter and the rooster • **When Human Strength Cannot Avail**—at Gethsemane • **When Other Answers Fail and Fall**—Pontius Pilate and Judas • **Where Lives Are Broken Helplessly—**the two thieves.

Pastors and parishes participating in **Lenten pulpit exchanges** will notice that once the first service ("Broken Hearts") is done in each pastor's home congregation, the others may be presented in almost any order.

Full-color bulletin covers depict each week's theme dramatically. **Bulletins** may be ordered blank or with pre-printed orders of service for each week. **The kit** includes homilies, prayers, and music for all included hymns, as well as samples of all the pre-printed bulletins. Purchase of the series grants permission to reproduce and/or adapt any of the service materials for local use.

A Unique Take-Home Reminder!

A unique optional feature offered with this series is an 8 1/2" x 11" **Table Top Triptych** which may be distributed (probably one per household) at the first service. Its "broken heart" design (the theme of the first service) becomes the background for **five stickers** to be distributed at each of the remaining services, while the triptych's border tableau includes scenes from all of the bulletin covers. Along with that tableau, the stickers serve as ongoing reminders of the series themes. For those who use this feature, the homilies include optional sections that make reference to each take-home item. (There are no stickers for Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, but those themes are depicted on the triptych tableau.)

Cost for the complete kit **$25.95**. Order Code **GB-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **GB-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **GB-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$20**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

Cost for the Triptych and sticker sets 1-99/**$.39**, 100+/**$.36**. Order Code **GB-L**.

Plus, Add These Two Holy Week Services

Those who desire may augment this series with two more services that continue the "God's Love Breaks Through!" format and theme:

The **Maundy Thursday** service speaks of "Blood Outpoured and Body Broken" and includes an order of Holy Communion. Order Code **GB-3**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **GB-A**. Blank bulletin Order Code **GB-C**.

The **Good Friday** service sees the curtain in the temple torn in two as Christ is crucified: "The Way Is Fully Open Now!" Order Code **GB-4**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **GB-B**. Blank bulletin Order Code **GB-D**.

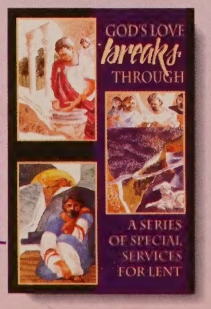
Services cost **$5.95** each or order both for **$10.95**. Order Code **GB-6**. Kit includes music, prayers, homily and bulletin sample.

Printed bulletins for either of these two services cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Extra blank bulletins cost **$3.75**/50, **$7.50**/100, **$30**/500.

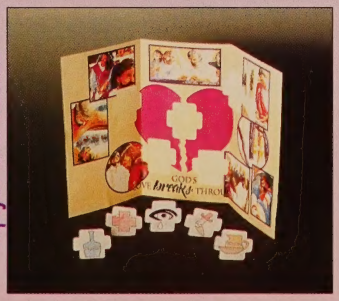
Publicize With A Special Bulletin Insert

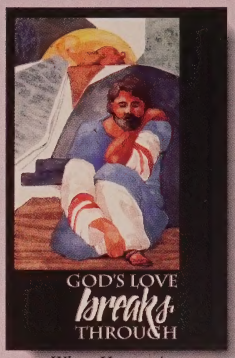
A Bulletin Insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **GB-7**, Cost **$5**/100, **$20**/500.

Special Bulletin Insert

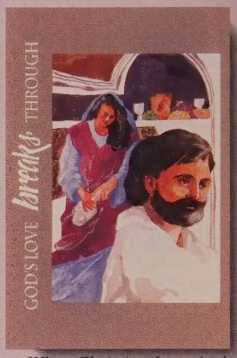


Triptych and Stickers

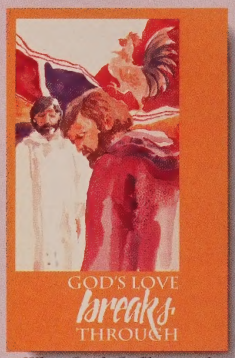




When Hearts Are Broken Tearfully

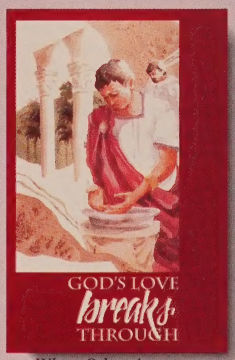


When Christian Love And Care Break Forth

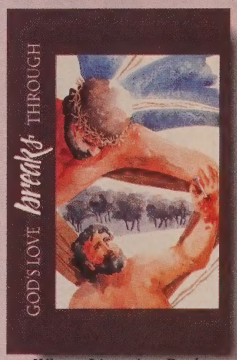


When Pride Is Shattered Shamefully

When Human Strength Cannot Avail



When Other Answers Fail And Fall



Where Lives Are Broken Helplessly

Blood Outpoured And Body Broken Maundy Thursday

The Way Is Fully Open Now Good Friday

The Wisdom of the Cross

In Christian art over the centuries the Cross has taken various forms, many of them rich in meaning. This Lenten series uses shape, history, background, and color to trace, step by step, the suffering and death of our Lord and apply its meaning to the lives of God's people today.

• Ashen gray (for Ash Wednesday), the *Crusaders' Cross* begins the journey. • The *Hunters' Cross* (which seems to be made of arrow tips) takes us to our Lord's betrayal and arrest. • The royal blue *Sovereign's Cross and Orb* sees the King of kings on trial before a Roman ruler. • The *Cross of Lorraine*, once a symbol of WWII French resistance, speaks of constancy in the midst of change. • Blood red, the three-stepped *Cross of the Ascent* leads to Calvary, urging faith, hope, and love. • Even today in Europe and Canada, a green cross identifies a pharmacy; so the *Arced Cross* speaks of ultimate healing.

Bulletins may be ordered with service printed, or blank. Pre-printed bulletins include opening litany, prayer of the week, Scripture readings listed, responsive psalmody, theme hymn stanzas, a hymned setting of the Lord's Prayer, and responsive benediction.

Samples of the printed **bulletins** are included in the kit, along with **music** for the hymns (only the opening hymn each week need be chosen locally; suggestions are offered), **homilies** and **prayers** for each service. Cost for the complete kit **$25.95.** Order Code **CW-1.**

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **CW-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **CW-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$20**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**. These blank bulletins are available in a large 8.5" x 14" size. See our bulletin selections.

PLUS, ADD THESE THREE HOLY WEEK SERVICES!
As an added feature, those who so desire may continue this series with three more services.

Maundy Thursday: The *Rounded Cross* with its three-in-one adornments speaks of God's great love and loyalty, made ours in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Order code **CW-3**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **CW-A**. Blank bulletin Order Code **CW-X**.

Good Friday: The black *Star Cross* proclaims Christ's saving work "finished" and looks to its far-reaching effects. Order code **CW-4**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **CW-B**. Blank bulletin Order Code **CW-Y**.

Easter: The golden *Flowered Cross* bespeaks Christ's resurrection victory. Order Code **CW-5**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **CW-C**. Blank bulletin Order Code **CW-Z**.

Services cost **$5.95** each or order all three for **$15.95. Order** Code **CW-6**. Each kit includes music, prayers, and homily.

Printed bulletins for these three services cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Extra blank bulletins cost **$3.75**/50**$7.50**/100, **$30**/500.

PUBLICIZE WITH A SPECIAL BULLETIN INSERT!
A Bulletin Insert to publicize the services is available. Code **CW-7** Cost **$5**/100, **$20**/500.

TAKE HOME PRAYER CARDS!
Please notice the set of six **Lenten Prayer Cards** which incorporate illustrations and prayers from this series. Hand them out at each service, or use them to publicize midweek services by handing them out the previous weekend. Order **sets** of all six cards, Order Code **CW-K**, Cost **$15**/50, **$25**/100, **$110**/500, **$200**/1000. Or order the cards **separately**, specifying the Order Codes printed to the right, Cost **$4**/50, **$6**/100, **$25**/500, **$40**/1000.

Ash Wednesday
Crusaders' Cross

Week 2
Hunters' Cross

Week 3
Sovereign's Cross

Week 4
Cross of Lorraine

Week 5
Cross of the Ascent

Week 6
Arced Cross

Maundy Thursday
Rounded Cross

Good Friday
Star Cross

Easter Sunday
Flowered Cross

Bulletin Insert
(**CW-7**)

CW-L

CW-D

CW-E

CW-F

CW-G

CW-H

Special Prayer Cards
Great Lenten Reminders for the Home

CW-J
(Good Friday)

Words That Last Forever

This is a **seven-part** series (the seventh service, *Into Your Hands*, is appropriate for Good Friday) based on the familiar and beloved **seven words of Christ from the cross.**

The orders of service are simple and direct, each emphasizing that week's Word from the Cross in • a responsive opening litany stressing the Word of God and employing the Word from the Cross • responsive psalmody • weekly theme stanzas of *Our Savior Speaks in Grace* • a three-stanza office hymn based on the day's Word • responsive prayers that have the congregation praying what they have heard and sung.

Homilies apply our Lord's timeless statements to the times in which we live. The homilies are written in such a way that they may be delivered by a single preacher—or by three different interacting voices. With some planning, this series might well be used by groups of congregations which share pastors and pulpits for special Lenten services.

Starkly dramatic **bulletins** may be ordered with service printed, or blank. Samples of all the preprinted bulletins are included in the kit, along with **music** for the included hymns, **homilies** and **prayers** for each service. Cost for the complete kit **$25.95.** Order Code **WL-1.**

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **WL-P**, 50 for each of seven weeks, Cost: **$34**, 100 for each of seven weeks, Cost: **$52**, 200 for each of seven weeks, Cost: **$92**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **WL-2**, 50 for each of seven weeks **$25**, 100 for each of seven weeks **$45**, 200 for each of seven weeks **$82**. See page 20 to order individual blanks.

PLUS, ADD THESE TWO HOLY WEEK SERVICES!

As an added feature, those who desire may expand this series with two more services which follow the same format.

Maundy Thursday: 'FOR YOU' - a service based on our Lord's Words of Institution, includes special hymned stanzas to serve as the preface and thanksgiving in the celebration of Holy Communion. Order code **WL-3**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **WL-A**. Blank bulletin Order Code **B-32.**

Easter: 'ALLELUIA!' - translates somber elements of other services in this series into a major-key celebration of our Lord's resurrection. A new hymn (to a familiar tune), *Now Let the Glorious News Be Heard*, recalls the Seven Last Words, now fulfilled in victory. Order code **WL-4**. Additional printed bulletins Order Code **WL-B**. Blank bulletin Order Code **B-34**.

Services cost **$5.95** each or order both for **$10.95. Order** Code **WL-8**. Kit includes music, prayers, homily & bulletin sample.

Printed bulletins for either of these two services cost **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100. Extra blank bulletins cost **$3.75**/50, **$7.50**/100, **$30**/500

PUBLICIZE WITH A SPECIAL BULLETIN INSERT!
A Bulletin Insert to publicize the services is available. Code **WL-7** Cost **$5**/100, **$20**/500.

SEND SERVICES HOME—WITH PRAYER CARDS!
Please notice the set of seven **Lenten Prayer Cards** which incorporate illustrations and prayers from this series. Hand them out at each service, or use them to publicize midweek services by handing them out the previous weekend. Order **sets of all seven cards**, Order Code **WL-L**, Cost **$17.50**/50, **$29**/100, **$120**/500, **$229**/1000. Or order the cards separately, specifying the Order Codes printed to the right, Cost **$4**/50, **$6**/100, **$25**/500, **$40**/1000.

Ash Wednesday
Forgive

Week 2
Paradise

Week 3
Behold

Week 4
Forsaken

Week 5
Thirst

Week 6
Finished

Maundy Thursday
For You

Good Friday
Hands

Easter Sunday
Alleluia

Bulletin Insert
(**WL-7**)

WL-D

WL-E

WL-F

WL-G

WL-H

WL-J

WL-K
(Good Friday)

Special Prayer Cards
Great Lenten Reminders for the Home

The Body of Christ

Here is a series of services that takes the time to consider seriously our Lord's humanity, the human body in which he wrought our salvation. Week by week, responsive calls to worship, Scripture readings, hymn stanzas, and prayers invite congregation members to focus their attention on:

- the feet of Christ
- the hands of Christ
- the ears of Christ
- the eyes of Christ
- the mouth of Christ
- the heart of Christ

Homilies on these topics, rich in biblical references, are scripted in such a way that they may be offered by two persons as dialog sermons—or by a single preacher.

Full-color **bulletin covers** feature stained glass art treasures. Bulletins may be ordered with order of service printed, or with inside pages and back cover blank. Purchase of the kit grants permission to reproduce and/or adapt any of the service materials.

Pastors and parishes participating in **Lenten pulpit exchanges** will notice that the six services may be offered in any order. A pastor (or team) from each congregation could present its assigned service in neighboring churches on a rotating schedule.

Along with a full set of scripts and music for the theme hymn, the kit includes samples of all six **pre-printed bulletins.** These bulletins contain a detailed order of service, complete with responsive opening dialog, psalmody, prayers, and listed Scriptures. **Notes for Worship Leaders** include hymn suggestions and other information.

Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **BD-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **BD-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **BD-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

As an added feature, those who so desire may continue this series with three more services:

Maundy Thursday: *The Blood of Christ* (with emphasis on Holy Communion) service Order Code **BD-3**, printed bulletin Order Code **BD-A,** blank bulletin Order Code **BD-X**

Good Friday: *The Body of Christ* (a close look at Christ's crucifixion) service Order Code **BD-4**, printed bulletin Order Code **BD-B,** blank bulletin Order Code **BD-Y**

Easter: *The Risen Body of Christ* (series summary: "You are the body of Christ!") service Order Code **BD-5**, printed bulletin Order Code **BD-C,** blank bulletin Order Code **BD-Z**

Services cost **$5.95** each or order all three for **$15.95** Order Code **BD-6**. Each service includes leader's guide, pre-printed bulletin sample, music and sermon.

Extra printed bulletins cost: **$5.50**/50, **$9.90**/100.
Extra blank bulletins cost: **$3.75**/50, **$7.50**/100, **$30**/500.

A **bulletin insert** to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **BD-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

Cross Examinations

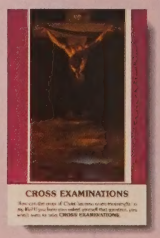
Seven services—one for each week of Lent and a final Holy Week summary presentation for either Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, or even Easter sunrise.

With scripts in hand, two participants each week begin at lectern and pulpit and then move about the chancel, assuming the roles of ancient characters (like Annas and Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Peter and Mark, St. Paul and Cyprian of Carthage) as well as modern ones (a reporter, a TV talk show host, a psychologist and an athletic coach, two businessmen at lunch, a busy dentist) as they deal with **the meaning of the Cross** in daily life, then and now.

Each kit includes sermon/drama scripts, samples of each of the seven bulletins and the publicity insert, and *Notes for Worship Leaders* which include directions for presenting the dialogs, as well as suggested hymns, Scriptures and prayers. Cost for the kit **$24.95** Order Code **CM-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **CM-P**, 50 for each of 7 weeks **$29**, 100 for each of 7 weeks **$49**, 200 for each of 7 weeks **$92**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **CM-2**, 50 for each of 7 weeks **$24**, 100 for each of 7 weeks **$44**, 200 for each of 7 weeks **$82**

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **CM-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.



Silent Witnesses

• The Thorns • The Robe • The Nail • The Spear • The Shroud • The Stone. If only these things could speak! What might they tell us?

Silent Witnesses is a series of six services in which the chief speaker each week takes the role of one of the *things* associated with our Lord's suffering and death, describing and interpreting the event and its meaning from that object's point of view.

The homilies may be offered as two-person **dialogs** in which the objects are "interviewed" by a second participant—or, if you prefer, they may be offered as **monologs** simply by omitting the part of the interviewer in each script.

Each kit includes notes for worship leaders, multiple copies of the sermons, pre-planned services with samples of the six pre-printed bulletins, and a sample bulletin publicity insert. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **WS-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **SW-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

Blank bulletins Order Code **WS-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **WS-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

The Hills of Lent

By means of hymns and dramatic homilies, the congregation is led on a biblically chronological journey to "mountain-top experiences" which all focus on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.

• At **Mount Moriah** Abraham's faith is tested and strengthened • At **Mount Sinai** Moses and the Israelites receive the word of God • At **Mount Carmel** Elijah calls for faith and faithfulness • Jesus joins the faithful in worship at **Mount Zion** • On **Mount Olivet** Jesus assures us that we too are the children of God • At **Mount Calvary** we view "God's own sacrifice complete" (This service may be used for Holy Week).

Services begin with the "Psalms of Ascent." Dramatic homilies involve a narrator and as many as four other readers. The congregation participates in the homilies with the singing of successive stanzas of *Unto the Hills.* Musical notations for the organist are provided to add to the drama of the presentations.

Each kit includes: sermon scripts, Worship Leader's Guide, Scripture readings, samples of each of the pre-printed bulletins and bulletin insert. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **HL-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **HL-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29** 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **HL-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **HL-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

Thoughts Along the Way

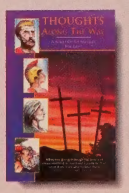
Besides what people *said* and *did* during the week of our Lord's Passion, what was going through their ***minds***? And what if we were able to *hear* these "thoughts along the way" to Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, our Lord's trials and crucifixion, the tomb and the Resurrection?

Each week's dramatic homily involves four participants—the *narrator* and *three readers* whose lines offer ***thoughts*** of such characters as John, Peter, Judas, Pilate, Herod, soldiers, female followers of Jesus, a cross-making carpenter, and even a befuddled Easter angel—three such characters each week.

The first service is adaptable to include the Ash Wednesday imposition of ashes; the final service could serve for Easter sunrise worship.

Along with a full set of scripts and music for the theme hymn,the kit includes samples of all six **pre-printed bulletins** offering a detailed order of service for each week complete with responsive opening dialog, psalmody, prayers, and listed Scriptures. **Notes for Worship Leaders** include hymn suggestions and other information. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95.** Order Code **SH-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **SH-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **SH-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.



A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **SH-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

Thus it is Written

By means of "first person" homilies (which may be offered by the pastor or by three different members of the congregation, each serving for two consecutive weeks), this Lenten series allows Mark, Luke, and John to tell—in person!—why they wrote about our Lord's Passion the way they did.

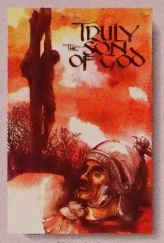
Thus, in the first service, "Mark" describes his account of **Gethsemane**; in the second service he discusses the **crucifixion**. In the second pair of services, "Luke" covers the same two incidents from his point of view; and in the last two homilies, "John" explains his particular emphases.

The **six worship folders** for these services feature full-color original cover artwork. The *Gospel reading* for each week is printed on the back page. **Pre-printed orders of service** on the inside pages include an opening Responsive Dialog drawn from the writings of the week's "guest evangelist," suggested Scriptures, responsive psalmody, and a series theme hymn. Samples of all six are included in the kit. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **WT-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins order code **WT-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. **Blank bulletins** Order Code **WT-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **WT-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

Week 1



Week 2

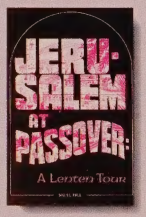
Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Jerusalem at Passover: A Lenten Tour



Suppose you had signed up for a guided tour of Jerusalem during the week of Passover in the year A.D.30 … what might you have seen and heard?

The audio dramas in this Lenten series are narrated by a typical travel agency "tour guide" on **an imaginary visit to the Holy City**, who offers historical, cultural, and religious commentary on the sights you are seeing, just as such a person might have done almost 2000 years ago, had there been conducted tours then. As many as 8 other readers participate. **Each week a new stop**: • The Temple • Passover • The Mount of Olives • The Palace of the High Priest • Fortress Antonia • Skull Hill. (At each of these, you realize, we will "accidentally" confront Jesus!)

The kit includes: leader's manual, individual scripts for each participant, orders of service, homilies, prayers, suggested psalms and hymns. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **JT-1**.

Coordinated **blank bulletins** for each week's tour: Order Code **JT-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **JT-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**

Overheard: Conversations by the Cross

Did various people who were involved in our Lord's Passion ever have an opportunity to talk with one another about it? People like • **Malchus & Mark** • **Barabbas & Caiaphas** • **Pilate and his wife** • **Simon & the centurion** • **Mary & John** • **the two thieves**.

Each audio drama in this series begins with a sermonic introduction to set the scene; a sermonic conclusion then comments and draws appropriate points. All these items are included in the reading scripts.

Each kit also includes a professionally produced **cassette tape** to help the congregation's actors "get the feel" for their parts. This tape may also be offered to a local radio station as a community service, or used by other groups in the parish. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **OH-1**.

Pre-printed bulletins Order Code **OH-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**. Blank Bulletins Order Code **OH-2**, 50 for each of six weeks **$22**, 100 for each of six weeks **$38**, 200 for each of six weeks **$70**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **OH-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

We Have Seen Jesus

Limited Quantities!

This unique and memorable series involves a **six-part filmstrip** featuring 68 masterpieces on display at our own National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Each week's visual presentation employs four speaking (reading) parts: a narrator plus two men and a woman. The accompanying Leader's Manual provides scriptures and a homily for each service, and suggestions for prayers and hymns. Cost for the complete kit **$24.95** Order Code **SJ-1**.

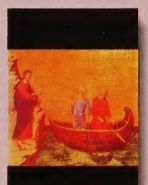
Beautiful bulletins display six of the masterpieces in full color; the back of each bulletin contains a catalogue of all the works of the masters in the filmstrip for that service. **Pre-printed bulletins** Order Code **SJ-P**, 50 for each of six weeks **$29**, 100 for each of six weeks **$48**, 200 for each of six weeks **$80**.

A bulletin insert to publicize the services is also available. Order Code **SJ-7**, 100/**$5**, 500/**$20**.

Christ at the Sea of Galilee (Week 3)

The Sacrament of the Last Supper (Week 1)

Descent From the Cross (Week 6)

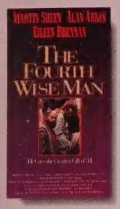

Calling of the Apostles (Week 2)

The Repentant Magdalen (Week 5)

Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery (Week 4)

Easter classics For Young People

Order Any 3 Easter Classics for $38.95 Code Q-20, 10 bonus points!
Get All Five for $59.95 Code Q-93, 15 Bonus Points!



The Fourth Wise Man is the gently comic fictional tale of a Magi named Artaban played by Martin Sheen. Artaban searches 33 years for Jesus, finally meeting the **Messiah on Easter morning**. (72 min., VHS) Code **U-29** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

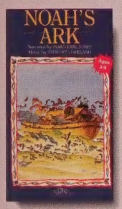
Easter Is. Frustrated by an Easter project he is working on, Benji is mean to his dog who runs away. Benji learns a valuable lesson about loss and the meaning of Easter. (25 min., VHS) Code **V-34,** Cost: **$12.95** *3 bonus points!*

Three Days is a dramatization of what Jesus' disciples might have gone through during those bleak three days between the crucifixion and the resurrection. (30 min., VHS) Code **V-37**, Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

The Magic Boy's Easter. A boy with a bone disease, dreams of Jesus' healings. Upon awakening, he consents to surgery, knowing Jesus will never leave him. (24 min., VHS) Code **V-35,** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*

Easter Today, Easter Forever. Nanny and Isaiah come to experience "Little Easters" through Christ's resurrection. (33 min., VHS) Order Code **V-33,** Cost: **$12.95** *3 bonus points!*

Animated Bible Stories



One of the greatest adventures of all time, this story springs to life under the narration of James Earl Jones. For children ages 3 to 11, this video is based on the award-winning book by Peter Spier. (27 min., VHS) Code **Q-73** Cost: **$14.99** *3 bonus points!*

Betrayed by his brothers, Joseph is sold into slavery and taken to Egypt, far from home. Part of the *Adventures in Character Building* series, this video teaches about love and forgiveness. (25 min., VHS) Code **U-40** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*

From the entertaining and fully animated *Adventures in Character Building* series, this video tells children the unforgettable story of the true meaning of helping others. (25 min., VHS) Code **U-39** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*

From the creators of *The Amazing Book*, **Once Upon The Beginning** uses music, animation and live action to teach children about the first 11 chapters of Genesis. (30 min., VHS) Order Code **Q-51** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

The Remarkable Journey, the sequel to *Once Upon The Beginning*, presents stories from the book of Genesis about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & Joseph. (30 min., VHS) Code **Q-52** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus pts.!*

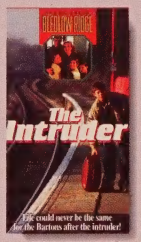
The Last Chance Detectives

NEW THIS YEAR!

The Mystery Lights of Navajo Mesa. At the edge of a small desert town, where a B-17 sits next to an old diner, a mystery has begun to unfold. At first it was just a strange voice on an old radio. But then unexplainable disappearances occur, and now mysterious lights appear. Four young friends decide to investigate. In this fast-paced adventure, kids learn the Biblical principle of forgiveness.
(50 min., VHS) Order Code **R-50,** Cost: **$19.95**
3 bonus points!

The Intruder

NEW THIS YEAR!



This new dramatic adventure story for children ages 8-12 features the Bartons, a respectable, stable and committed Christian family living a comfortable suburban existence—until cousin Kevin comes to live with them and everyone's patience and character are tested to the limit by the adventure that unfolds. This video teaches young people about responsibility and the power of forgiveness. (58 min., VHS) Code **R-51,** Cost: **$19.95**
3 bonus points!

The Animated Classic!

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is an Emmy award-winning version of C.S. Lewis' allegory. A study guide is provided. (95 min., VHS) Code **V-76**, Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*

Now Get the Entire 13-Volume Set of 'Children's Heroes of the Bible' ABSOLUTELY FREE!

Here's How the 'Bonus Points' Plan Will Work:

Receive **bonus points** for every video you purchase from Creative Communications for the Parish. For every 10 bonus points earned, you can pick out **free** one of the 13 episodes of "Children's Heroes of the Bible." *Please note: bonus points must be used at time of purchase; they do not carry over to future orders.*

Purchase additional "Children's Heroes" episodes at discounts, or receive the entire set **free** through the bonus point system. When you place your video order, the order taker will tell you how many bonus points you have earned. Simply select a free tape for every 10 points, and it will be included in your order.

Special Discounts on 'Children's Heroes of the Bible' Series

This low-cost 13-volume series is a wonderful way to introduce children to the great people, events, teachings and stories of the Old and New Testaments. Children love to watch these Biblically based stories again and again. (approx. 23 min.)
Cost **$9.95 each**

OLD TESTAMENT

The Story of Joseph Order Code **S-39**
The Story of Moses Order Code **S-40**
The Story of David Order Code **S-41**
The Story of Elijah Order Code **S-42**
The Story of Jeremiah Code **S-43**
The Story of Esther Order Code **S-44**

NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus' Death and Resurrection Code **S-8L***
Jesus' Birth and Youth Order Code **S-5L***
Jesus Teaches and Calls Disciples Code **S-33**
Jesus Heals and Works Miracles Code **S-34**
Jesus' Struggles and Opponents Code **S-35**
Apostles and the Early Church Code **S-37**
Paul's Ministry and Trials Order Code **S-38**

**Special Price* $5.95*

Buy Any Three for $22.95 Code S-56
Buy Entire Series, only $89.95 Code S-55

Focus on Jesus This Lent And Easter With Great Video Programs!

Jesus And His Times

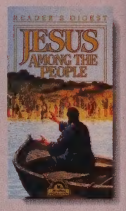
Order All 3 for $49.95 Code U-90, 10 bonus points!

$19.95 each
3 bonus points each!

Jesus: The Final Days. Join Jesus at the Last Supper. Witness His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, His trial before Pontius Pilate. Despair with his followers at the crucifixion and rejoice at the events that followed. (55 min., VHS) Order Code **U-89**

Jesus: The Story Begins. Travel the dusty roads with Joseph and Mary as they make their way to Bethlehem. See for yourself what life was like for the Holy Family in Egypt. (61 min., VHS) Code **U-87**

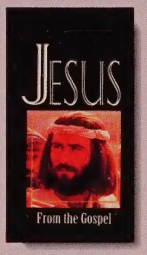
Jesus: Among The People. Watch Jesus teaching in the synagogues of Galilee and understand how His teachings echoed those of the highly respected Pharisees—and how they differed. (57 min., VHS) Order Code **U-88**



Jesus: From the Gospel

Imagine seeing Jesus walk, hearing him speak, watching him at every turn. This remarkable series of videos, with their word-for-word reenactments of Scripture, are as close as you can get. Each video presents a treasured portion of the Gospel according to Luke. Over 250 scholars have critiqued every frame to assure complete authenticity. Each program is approximately 40 minutes (VHS) and costs **$14.95**. *2 bonus points each!*

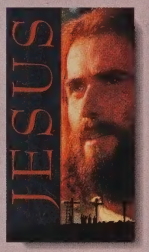
Tape 1: The Birth Order Code **R-53**
Tape 2: The Parables Order Code **R-54**
Tape 3: The Passion Order Code **R-55**



Order All Three, Only $39.95 Code R-56 7 bonus points!

Jesus

Award-winning producer John Heyman has created a film so true-to-life that you'll feel like you're in first-century Palestine with the Savior. Workshop teams painstakingly studied the clothing, architecture, customs and food to ensure the film's complete authenticity. *Jesus* was filmed on location in Israel in Biblical settings with a cast of more than 5,000 Israelis and Arabs. And virtually every word is taken directly from the Gospel of Luke.
(120 min., VHS) Order Code **R-57** Cost: **$29.95**
Also in Spanish! Order Code **R-58** (Spanish)
4 bonus points!



Special Note: The programs listed above are related to Genesis Project's *The Bible on Video*, formerly known as *The New Media Bible*. The *Jesus* film is an abridged version of the book of Luke, covering only the life of Jesus. *Jesus and His Times* is a docu-drama that incorporates footage from *The Bible on Video* with commentary and other background information. *Jesus: From the Gospel* is an abridged version of *The Bible on Video*.

Yeshua

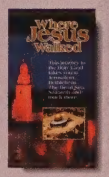
Small Group or Large, Lent is the Ideal Time for Bible Study!

"Yeshua," the Hebrew name for Jesus, offers a fascinating new view of Jesus' life. This five-hour miniseries filmed on location in the Holy Land reveals ancient customs with a clarity not afforded by most historical treatments. Each tape comes with its own discussion guide. Complete 5-tape series. Order Code **Q-85**, Cost: **$119.95** *15 bonus points!*
Each tape ordered separately, **$24.95**. *4 bonus points each!*

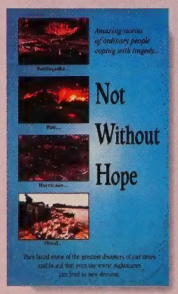
Tape 1: **The Land and the Promise** begins in Ur of the Chaldees, the birthplace of Abraham, and ends with the Hebrews' return to a homeland soon taken over by Rome. **Q-80**
Tape 2: **The Promise Takes Root** begins with the angel's visit to Mary and proceeds through the presentation of Jesus in the temple. **Q-81**
Tape 3: **Voice and the Light** tells of the zealous Jewish community at Qumran where John, orphaned as a child, may have grown up. This tape details Jesus' early ministry. **Q-82**
Tape 4: **The Bread of Sacrifice** shows how Jesus prepared his followers for his coming Passion. This segment ends with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. **Q-83**
Tape 5: **Ripples of Darkness, Waves of Light** includes dramatic reenactments of the torture, execution, burial and resurrection of Jesus and an inquiry into the Shroud of Turin. **Q-84**

New Low Price!

Where Jesus Walked



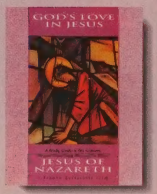
This video takes you to Jerusalem, Nazareth, the Garden of Gethsemane, the River Jordan, Calvary and more. Breathtaking photography and dramatic background music will leave a lasting impression on those who make this video visit to the Holy Land. (30 min., VHS) Code **U-56** Cost:**$14.95** *3 bonus points*



Not Without Hope

Not Without Hope picks up after tragic events fade from the public eye…tragedies like the death of two family members in one month, the great midwest flood, and the Los Angeles earthquake. People must pick up their broken lives and Christians can play a vital role. See the church in action as never before…assisting in the recovery and witnessing to the Gospel. **Not Without Hope** is inspirational…ideal for viewing by any Christian group. (45 min., VHS) Order Code **R-52,** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*
Study version, designed for a six-week Bible study, includes a specially edited tape for use with a **study guide** with reproducible study sheets. Code **R-61,** Cost: **$29.95** *4 bonus points!*

Lenten Study Program Based On 'Jesus of Nazareth'



God's Love In Jesus of Nazareth is a new **6-part Lenten Bible study** that includes a detailed Leader's Guide (paper, 40 pgs.), 12 copies of student work sheets for each session plus complete 3-cassette *Jesus of Nazareth* video. 25 minutes of video provide an integral part of each session in this exciting series. From Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his glorious resurrection, the video drama and Bible study provide an ideal Lenten growth opportunity. Code **JV-5** Cost **$69.95**. Study program without the video includes **God's Love in Jesus of Nazareth Leader's Guide** plus 12 copies of each session study questions. Code **JV-3** Cost **$19.95.**

For Discounts on Christian Video, Look to Creative Communications for the Parish

More Lenten Study Opportunities

Jesus Then And Now New Low Prices!

Jesus Christ—carpenter from Nazareth, leader of disciples, victim of a plot that led to his crucifixion, reported alive again three days later. Who was this man? What makes people follow him today? This **12-part video** series seeks to answer some of these questions. Each program is 20 minutes long. Complete series comes with two tapes, and a 28-page study/leader's guide. (240 min., VHS) Code **V-39** Cost: **$39.95**
5 bonus points!

Special Lenten Edition!

6 programs from the *Jesus Then and Now* Series: Temptation, Prayer, The Man, Opposition, Crucifixion and Resurrection. **Package includes:** one tape, Study / Leader's guide. Code **Q-16** Cost: $29.95 *4 bonus pts.!*

The Trial And Testimony Of The Early church

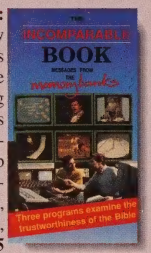
The first three centuries were decisive for Christianity. The very existence of the Church was threatened by powerful opponents out to destroy it. These **6 half-hour video programs** answer the question, "How did the Early Church survive and spread?" These programs go to the locations and use dramatic re-creations to bring you close to these early believers.
The following topics are covered: **Foundations:** What happened to the 12 apostles? **Spread:** The Word was for all. How did they bring their message to the world? **Accusation:** Believers were subject to many charges, some outrageously false and others true. **Persecution:** The mightiest empire in history outlawed and persecuted them. Why? **Testimony:** A close-up look at heroes who paid with their lives rather than deny their faith. **Transition:** Constantine granted the Church legality and favor.
Was this a bane or a blessing? Why did the Church succeed?

The complete package includes:
- 6 or 12-part curriculum
- full-color companion booklet
- film scripts
- leader's guide
- reproducible student worksheets.

Order Code **S-76**, Cost: **$99.95!**
12 bonus points!

A.D. The Book of Acts comes alive in this 3-tape epic covering the years 30-69 A.D. Video comes with a Study Guide outlining a 12-session course of study. An all-star cast makes this great entertainment as well as illuminating study! (360 min., VHS) Order Code **V-46** Cost: **$99.95**
12 bonus points!

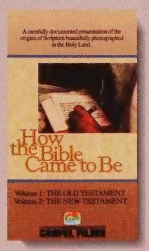
The Incomparable Book: Messages from the Memory Bank. This 3-part video series has convincing proof of the Bible's reliability. Combining modern television techniques with standard methods of inquiry, it puts Bible scholarship into the video age. Includes 16-page leader's guide. (One tape, three 20-minute segments, VHS) Code **Q-76** Cost: **$39.95**
4 bonus points!



Time Travel Through The Bible. Jonathan Frakes of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" stars in this "time machine" journey through the Old and New Testaments. Filmed on location in the Holy Land, *Time Travel Through the Bible* is an informative venture through the lives and times of the great Biblical figures. (107 min., VHS) Order Code **Q-54**, Cost: **$29.95** *4 bonus points!*

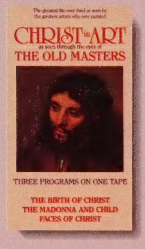
The Garden Tomb: A Special Place. The resurrection is highlighted in this video. Pilgrims to Jerusalem have found this location, perhaps Christ's own tomb, to be a very special place. Ideal Easter morning viewing for Bible groups! (30 min., VHS) Order Code **V-41** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

How The Bible Came To Be. Photographed in the Holy Land, this video is an informative two-volume set—all on one tape. These volumes take a "literal" approach to Scripture and the origins of the Bible. (55 min., VHS) Order Code **V-43,** Cost: **$29.95**
4 bonus points!



The Passover. You are welcomed into a Jewish home for the festival meal celebrated on the first night of Passover. A surprise ending reveals the significance of the meal's symbols and the true Messiah to whom these symbols point. (30 min., VHS) Order Code **V-40**, Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

Christ In Art: The Old Masters. This documentary surveys the most moving images of Christ—from Leonardo da Vinci to Rembrandt and others. Tape is divided into three 15-minute programs. (45 min., VHS) Order Code **V-42** Cost: **$29.95** *4 bonus points!*



Fun Family Viewing—Videos With Values!

Christy. Based on the Catherine Marshall best-seller, this TV premiere movie touched the hearts of young and old. Spirited Christy Huddleston leaves her comfortable city home to teach school in the Tennessee backwoods. (80 min., VHS) Order code **R-59** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

New!

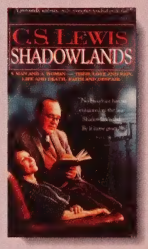
The Hiding Place. The true story of Corrie Ten Boom and her family who sheltered Jews in wartime Holland—until the Nazis discovered the "hiding place." Corrie and her sister struggle to keep alive their hope and faith in God. (145 min., VHS) Code **R-60** Cost: **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

New!

Waiting For The Wind. Robert Mitchum and Rhonda Fleming star in this powerful and inspiring story. An old man's rugged faith in the face of a terminal illness is conveyed to his adoring grandson. This is Christian video at its most compelling! (28 min., VHS) Code **S-99,** Cost: **$12.95**
3 bonus points!

New Low Price!

C.S. Lewis' Through The Shadowlands. C.S. Lewis, the brilliant Christian writer and Cambridge scholar, has his faith in Christ severely tested by the death of his wife. He struggles to find peace and move forward in faith. (73 min., VHS) Code **Q-17** Cost: **$19.95**
3 bonus points!



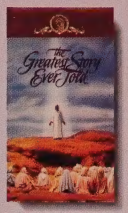
For Discounts on Christian Video, Look to Creative Communications for the Parish

Epic Videos With Biblical Themes For Home And Church Library

The Ten Commandments
Cecil B. DeMille's classic version of *The Ten Commandments* tells the story of Moses (Charlton Heston) and the Hebrew exodus. (2 tapes, 219 min., VHS) Code **Q-10** Cost: **$29.95** *4 bonus points!*

King of Kings
From Christ's birth in a manger to the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, *King of Kings* brings the life of Christ to the screen with taste and reverence. (170 min., VHS) Order code **Q-86**, Cost: **$29.95** *4 bonus points!*

The Greatest Story Ever Told
Internationally- acclaimed actor Max Von Sydow's stirring performance reveals the compassion, anguish and glory of Jesus Christ. (2 tapes, 199 min., VHS) Code **Q-91**, Cost: **$29.95** *4 bonus points!*



Ben-Hur
Ben-Hur, a peace-loving prince of Judea, leads his nation against the conquering Romans. Charlton Heston's portrayal brings to life a legendary hero. (211 min., VHS) Code **Q-21** Cost: **$29.95.** *4 bonus points!*

Special Offer: Order Any 2 Biblical Epics, Only $49.95 Order Code R-62, 8 bonus points!

The New Adventures of McGee and Me

Beauty in the Least (needs of others) Code **U-49** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*
In the Nick of Time (courage) Code **Q-79** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*
The Blunder Years (being genuine) Code **Q-98** Cost: **$14.95** *3 bonus points!*

Over 1 million sold in Series!

Nicholas and his friend, an animated character named McGee, always seem to learn a valuable lesson from their wild adventures. Kids ages 5-14 love the excitement of these action-packed episodes and parents appreciate the Biblical values they teach!

The Original 'Adventures of McGee and Me'

Just $14.95 each! 3 bonus points each!

The Big Lie (honesty) Code **V-55** *Special price $12.95!*
Skate Expectations (kindness) Code **V-58**
A Star in the Breaking (humility) Code **V-56**
The Not-So-Great Escape (obedience) Code **V-57**
Twister and Shout (faith/courage) Code **V-59**
Back to the Drawing Board (jealousy) Code **V-60**
Do the Bright Thing (decision-making) Code **V-82**
Take Me Out of the Ballgame (trust) Code **V-83**
'Twas the Fight Before Christmas (love) Code **V-84**

Get Any Three McGee & Me episodes, Only $39.95, Code V-85 10 bonus points!

Get all 3 'New Adventures' plus all 9 Original 'McGee and Me' episodes, Only $144.95, Order Code V-61, 20 bonus points!

'The Easter Story' Of Hanna-Barbera's 'Greatest Adventure' Series

The Easter Story traces the story of the exciting events surrounding Jesus' resurrection beginning with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday through his ascension into heaven. **The Easter Story** is part of the acclaimed *Greatest Adventure* series of Bible stories produced by the masters of animation, Hanna-Barbera.
(30 min., VHS) Code **V-73** Cost: **$9.95** *3 bonus points!*

Any 3 Tapes, $25.95, Code V-81, 10 bonus pts.!

OTHER TITLES IN SERIES: (30 min., VHS) **$9.95,** *3 bonus points* each:

**Available in Spanish*

Creation Code **V-79***
Moses Code **V-66***
Noah's Ark Code **V-69**
David & Goliath Code **V-67***
Joseph & His Brothers Code **V-80**
Joshua & the Battle of Jericho Code **V-68***
Daniel & the Lion's Den Code **V-71***
Samson and Delilah Code **V-70***
The Miracles of Jesus Code **S-86**
The Nativity Code **V-72**
Jonah Code **Q-67**
Queen Esther Code **Q-53**

All 13, $99.95, Code V-74, 20 bonus pts.!

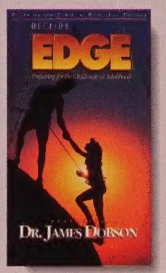
The Story of Ruth

New!

Ruth, a young Moabite woman, marries Mahlon the Judean, who believes in a merciful God. When he dies, she leaves her own culture and faces hostility as a stranger in order to be with her mother-in-law, Naomi. (132 min., VHS) Code **R-63**, Cost **$19.95** *3 bonus points!*

Life On The Edge: Preparing for the Challenges of Adulthood

Whether a young person is selecting a career or choosing a mate, the decisions that are made in these crucial transition years will shape his or her future. This series tackles misguided thinking about respect, love, safe sex, God's will, emotions and lifestyle choices. **Dr. James Dobson** of *Focus on the Family* speaks to young people candidly and with respect for their dreams, fears, and freedom to make choices.
Session 1: Finding God's Will For Your Life. Dr. Dobson shows teens how to balance responsibility and freedom, and make decisions within the will of God. (52 min., VHS) Code **R-19**
Session 2: The Myth Of Safe Sex. Dr. Dobson tackles the myths and misinformation that our society feeds young people. (52 min., VHS) Code **R-20**
Session 3: Love Must Be Tough. Genuine love must be tough to survive the stresses of today's world. This view helps teens build healthy relationships on mutual respect, confidence and courage. (53 min., VHS) Code **R-21**
Session 4: The Keys To A Lifelong Love. In a society of dissolving commitment and fidelity, Dr. Dobson shows adolescents how to defy the odds and build lasting, satisfying relationships. (51 min., VHS) Code **R-22**



Each tape in this series $19.95, 3 bonus points!
Entire Series, Only $99.95, Code R-26, 12 bonus points!

Session 5: Emotions: Can You Trust Them? Though emotional ups and downs are a part of living, they don't have to dominate life. Dr. Dobson offers keys for handling emotions. (39 min., VHS) Code **R-23**
Session 6: When God Doesn't Make Sense. It's easy to believe that life will be carefree and happy, but everyone experiences difficulties that are not easy to understand. Dr. Dobson offers insights on how to cope with life's trials from his book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. (49 min., VHS) Code **R-24**
Session 7: Pornography: Addictive, Progressive and Deadly. This frank talk about the temptation, addiction and perversion of pornography emboldens young people to resist its influence. Includes segments from Dr. Dobson's interview with serial killer Ted Bundy. (47 min., VHS) Code **R-25**

Special Curriculum Package!
Get all seven sessions of **Life On The Edge** on **four tapes**, plus a leader's guide with group activities and discussion questions, and Dr. Dobson's book *Parenting Is Not For Cowards*—all housed in a sturdy case.
(4 tapes, VHS) Order Code **R-64** Cost: **$119.95** *12 bonus points!*

For Discounts on Christian Video, Look to Creative Communications for the Parish

Glimpses – A Bulletin Insert Series of Church History

Broaden the vision of your members with ***Glimpses*** into the "people, events, life and faith from the Church across the ages" by subscribing to these inexpensive monthly bulletin inserts. Prepared by the *Christian History Institute*, these half-sheets put into concise, lay terms fascinating knowledge of church history. Six inserts are shipped twice a year along with *Pastor's Notes*, a companion publication for the pastor with additional details and sermon ideas to make fullest use of each insert. Subscriptions are ongoing, billed with each shipment. Cancel at any time.

One year subscription to ***Glimpses*** includes 12 monthly issues, shipped in groups of 6 twice a year; begins with January 1995. Order Code **GS-S** Cost: 50 of each of six inserts/**$15**; 100 of each/**$28**; 250 of each/**$60**. Plus shipping. (Your second group of six inserts for 1995 will be shipped in June 1995.)

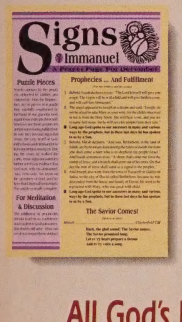
Glimpses for 1995 focuses on two fascinating areas:

January-June 1995 - The Bible
The Bible: Tischendorf
The Bible: The Canon
The Bible: Jerome
The Bible: The Middle Ages
The Bible: Tyndale
The Bible: The English Bible

July-December 1995 - Christianity in Early America
The Church in Jamestown
The People Called Puritans
Anne Bradstreet—Puritan Wife
John Winthrop
Thanksgiving Customs in America
John Eliot-Apostle to the Indians

Prayer Pages

A Fresh Way to Open Parish Meetings



Available by the month, **Prayer Pages** are ideal to open parish meetings or gatherings! Printed on 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 sheets, they offer brief devotions, including litanies, prayers, Psalms and hymns. **Prayer Pages** encourage participation and are handy!

Prayer Pages cost: **$5**/50 per month, please order in 50s. Save money, order **Prayer Pages** for 1995, **all twelve months**, 50 sheets per month cost: **$39**, 100 sheets, **$69,** Order Code **Y-13**.

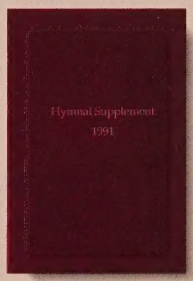
1995 Prayer Pages "Signs Of God's Presence"

Jan. Signs of Light	**YY-1**	***Jul.*** Signs of the Kingdom	**YY-7**
Feb. Signs of Power	**YY-2**	***Aug.*** Signs of Patience	**YY-8**
Mar. Signs of Compassion	**YY-3**	***Sep.*** Signs of Teaching	**YY-9**
Apr. Signs of Redemption	**YY-4**	***Oct.*** Signs of Hope	**Y-10**
May Signs of Life	**YY-5**	***Nov.*** Signs of Providence	**Y-11**
Jun. Signs of the Spirit	**YY-6**	***Dec.*** Signs of Immanuel	**Y-12**

All God's People Sing! – A Songbook for the Whole Year

A new book of songs and much more! Over 200 hymns, spirituals and carols for children (grades 3-8), youth and adults, including modern and traditional ethnic and folk hymns, plus easy liturgies for Advent, Lent, etc. and special occasions. Also has the Apostles' Creed, Luther's *Small Catechism*, and prayers for a variety of occasions. Even includes indexes of the hymns by Scripture text, first line and those in canon form. For Sunday Schools, day schools, song leaders, pastors, church musicians and parents. A perfect *supplement* to TLH, LW and LBW. Hardbound, 316 pages, 6x9" size. Order Code **GP-S** Cost: **$7.95**/1-50; **$6.95**/50+ **Pastor's sample copy** (one only, please)—Order Code **GP-X** Cost: **$5.95. Accompaniment book,** spiral bound, duplicates the hardbound book in a large, double-page, (12x9") soft cover format. Order Code **GP-A** Cost: **$22.95.**

Hymnal Supplement



This worship resource for Lutheran parishes contains many hymns and songs of the Church written in the last 15 years, as well as classic resources to enlarge and enrich the parish repertory. Contains 140 hymns, psalms, and liturgical settings, including alternative, contemporary communion liturgies (one by Marty Haugen and another in a newly-revised and expanded form from Pacific Lutheran University). The Hymnal Supplement 1991 is designed to complement *LBW* and *LW*. For Pew Edition with soft cover, Order Code **HS-9**, Cost **$4.95** each. For spiral bound accompaniment edition, Order Code **HS-0**, Cost **$18.95** each.

Bargain Bulletins

Bargain Bulletins (large and regular sizes), Letterhead, and Offering Envelopes—at **$3.90** per hundred, a 45% savings. First-rate and colorful, we do not have sufficient stock to offer them as our regular bulletins. Great as extra bulletins or covers for other publications. You pick the **category**, we pick the **bulletin cover**, providing you the quantity you need. Great prices!

Product	*Order Code*
Lent Bulletins (8.5x11)	LB-T
Lent Fullview Bulletins (8.5x11)	LB-F
Lent Bulletins Large (8.5x14)	LB-X
Lent Letterhead	LB-L
Lent Offering Envelopes	LB-O
Palm Sun. Bulletins (8.5x11)	PB-T
Maundy Thur. Bulletins (8.5x11)	MB-T
Easter Bulletins (8.5x11)	EB-T
Easter Fullview Bulletins (8.5x11)	EB-F
Easter Bulletins Large (8.5x14)	EB-X
Easter Letterhead	EB-L
Easter Offering Envelopes	EB-O

Bulletins for Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Ash Wednesday

F-72 (8.5 x 11)
F-73 (8.5 x 14)

A-73 (8.5x11)

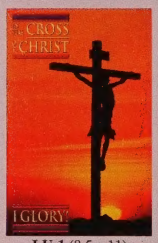
General Lent

G-48 (8.5 x 11)
G-62 (8.5 x 14)

A-74 (8.5x11)

A-77 (full view 8.5x11)
A-78 (not full view 8.5x11)
A-79 (not full view 8.5x14)

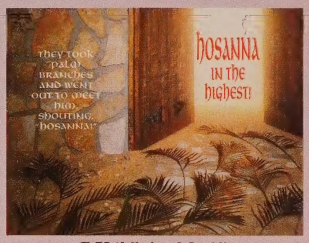
Palm Sunday



LU-1 (8.5 x 11)
LU-2 (8.5 x 14)

F-80 (8.5 x 11)
F-81 (8.5 x 14)

F-74 (8.5 x 11)
F-79 (8.5 x 14)

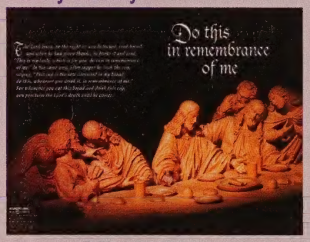


F-75 (full view 8.5 x 11)
F-78 (not full view 8.5 x 14)

E-33 (8.5x11)

A-80 (8.5x11)
A-81 (8.5x14)

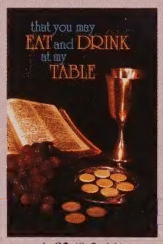
Maundy Thursday



B-73 (full view 8.5 x 11)

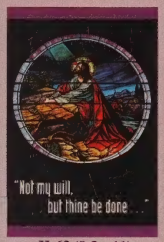
I-70 (8.5 x 11)

F-82 (8.5 x 11)



A-82 (8.5x11)
A-83 (8.5x14)

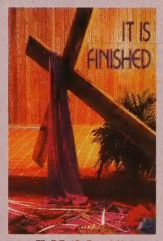
A-84 (8.5x11)
A-85 (8.5x14)



H-62 (8.5 x 11)
M-62 (8.5 x 14)

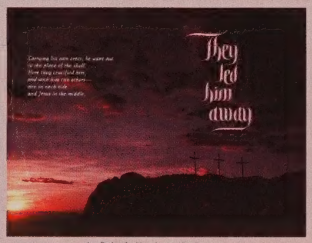
Good Friday

H-67 (8.5 x 11)



F-85 (8.5 x 11)
F-86 (8.5 x 14)

I-69 (8.5 x 11)



A-86 (full view 8.5x11)
A-87 (not full view 8.5x11)

Seven Last Words Series

B-26 (8.5 x 11)

B-27 (8.5 x 11)

A Series for Lent Through Easter

B-28 (8.5 x 11)

B-29 (8.5 x 11)

B-30 (8.5 x 11)

B-31 (8.5 x 11)

Maundy Thursday

B-32 (8.5 x 11)

Good Friday

B-33 (8.5 x 11)

Easter

B-34 (8.5 x 11)

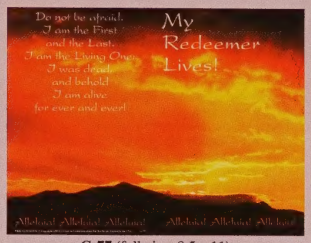
Bulletins for Lent, Holy Week and Easter

More Lent/Easter Favorites

JC-2 (8.5 x 11)

A-88 (8.5x11)
A-89 (8.5x14)

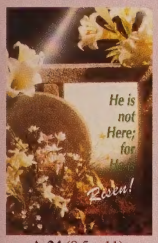
B-47 (8.5 x 14)



G-77 (full view 8.5 x 11)
G-78 (not full view 8.5 x 14)

A-62 (full view 8.5x11)
A-63 (not full view 8.5x14)

Easter

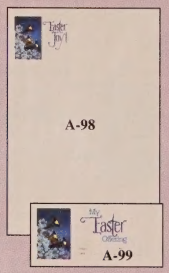


A-24 (8.5 x 11)
M-26 (8.5 x 14)

A-90 (8.5x11)
A-91 (8.5x14)

A-92 (8.5x11)
A-93 (8.5x14)

A-96 (8.5x11)
A-97 (full view 8.5x11)



Quarter Coin Holder with slot for currency or check, fits in #10 envelope.

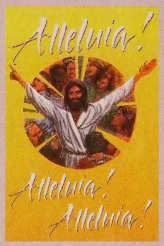
E-18

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday **B-56** (full view 8.5 x 11)
B-57 (not full view 8.5 x 14)

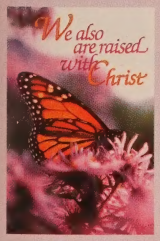
Easter

Easter B-60 (full view 8.5 x 11)
B-61 (not full view 8.5 x 14)

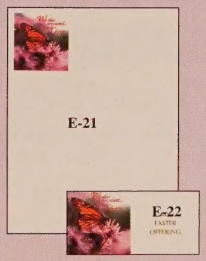


LU-4 (8.5 x 11)

CW-Z (8.5 x 11)
CW-W (8.5x14)



E-19 (8.5x11)
E-20 (8.5x14)



King Size, Tri-fold Bulletin measures 8.5x16.3 and tri-folds to 8.5x5.5. This bulletin contains up to 65% more space, eliminating the need for an insert.

NEW!

E-23

Cost For Bulletin Resources

8.5x11 Bulletins	**$7.50**/100, **$30**/500, **$53**/1000
8.5x14 Bulletins	**$8.50**/100, **$35**/500, **$59.50**/1000
8.5x16.3 Tri-fold Bulletins	**$9.50**/100, **$39**/500, **$67**/1000
8.5x11 Letterhead	**$7.50**/100, **$30**/500, **$53**/1000
Contribution Envelopes	**$6.95**/100, **$28**/500, **$50**/1000
Window Env. for Letterhead	**$5.25**/100, **$22**/500, **$36**/1000
Coin Holders	**$.33 each**/1-99, **$.31**/100-499, **$.29**/500

Pentecost

E-24 (8.5 x 11)
E-25 (8.5 x 14)

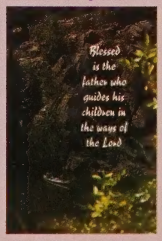
Confirmation

E-26 (full view 8.5 x 11)

Mother's Day

E-27(8.5 x 11)
E-28 (8.5 x 14)

Father's Day



E-29 (8.5 x 11)
E-30 (8.5x14)

Graduation

E-31 (8.5 x 11)
E-32 (8.5 x 14)

Cards for Teachers and Pupils

SK-1 SK-2 SK-3

Creative's seven new cards for your school are perfect for thanking teachers, parents and students. Sally Beck's brilliant art plus a Christian message and Scripture verse grace every card. You may combine any number of the six different cards to reach a quantity discount price. Cards are supplied flat with quality, matching envelopes.

Teacher Thank you: *Your love of the Lord is reflected in the face and heart of every child in your class. Thanks for the faithful witness.* plus Ps. 34:11. Order Code **SK-1**, *Well done! Noah's Ark—a monumental task, an incredible act of faith,-a spectacular witness to God's love. You've been building arks—and we're grateful.* plus Heb. 11:7. Order Code **SK-2**

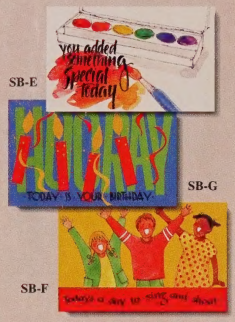
Parent Volunteer: *Hats off to a very special volunteer. Hats off to a very special friend of our school. Hats off to a very special worker in God's kingdom.* plus Eph. 1:15-16. Order Code **SK-3**, *Thanks a bunch—from our bunch! You give so much to our school.* plus Ps. 26:7. Order Code **SK-4**, **Student Recognition:** *You're a star! Star gazing, Twinkling star, Seeing stars, Star of the show. Today YOU are the STAR - Congratulations.* plus Job 38:7. Order Code **SK-5**, **Student Birthday:** *Birthday blessings, friend of Jesus. May your day be filled with fun. Be at peace and sleep with angels. When your birthday day is done.* plus (canticle) *"Young women will dance for joy and men young and old will make merry."* Order Code **SK-6**, **Sick Child.** *How sad we feel to see your empty seat. We hope and pray you'll soon be on your feet.* plus Eph. 6:15. Code **SK-7**

SK-4 SK-5 SK-6 SK-7

Cost **$.57** each/25-49, **$.47** each/50-99, **$.40** each/100+.

Sunday School Postcards

For First-Timers, Absentees and Birthdays



SB-E SB-G SB-F

Postcards to help you build up your Sunday School! Three new postcards make it easy to let your Sunday schoolers know you care about them. Bright, youthful art by Sally Beck, plus a greeting, a short Scripture verse, and space for your message on the mailing side. The 3 1/2 x 5 1/2" cards come in packs of 25. Cost: **$3.95**

You added something special *to our class today. Thanks. Please come again. I Cor. 12:27.* Order Code **SB-E**

Happy Birthday:

Today's a day to sing and shout ... *And what's this happiness about? A friend of ours was born today and this is what we want to say: Jesus bless you on your birthday—and every day.* Psalm 132:9. Order Code **SB-F**

Hooray! Today is your birthday. *Jesus and your friends at Sunday School are happy for you.* Order Code **SB-G**

Nobody else can fill your shoes *(Come join us next Sunday! 1 Cor 12:4).* Order Code **SB-A**.

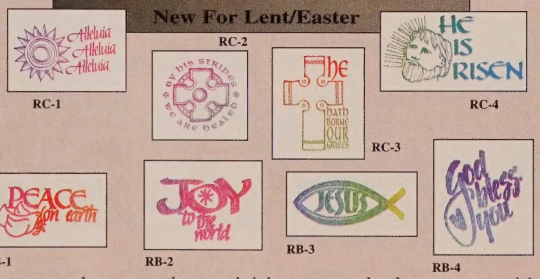
We're all smiles *(thinking about seeing you again in Sunday School. Phil. 1:7)* Order Code **SB-B**.

Don't skip the fun *(See you in Sunday School! Ps. 47:1)* Order Code **SB-C**.

SB-C SB-A SB-B

Christian Rubber Stamps

New For Lent/Easter



RC-1 RC-2 RC-3 RC-4

RB-1 RB-2 RB-3 RB-4

Pastors, teachers—use these to brighten your school papers or parish letters, envelopes, seasonal gifts or handouts. Here's a collection of contemporary Christian art on rubber stamps and a choice of multi-color, opaque pigment stamp pads for unexcelled color and resolution quality. Stamps approx. 1 1/2 x 1 1/2" size.

Alleluia; Order **RC-1**, *By His Stripes;* Order **RC-2**, *He Hath Borne;* Order **RC-3**, *He is Risen;* Order **RC-4**, *Peace on Earth;* Order Code **RB-1,** *Joy to the World*; Order Code **RB-2,** *Jesus*; Order Code **RB-3,** *God Bless You*; Order Code **RB-4,** Cost **$5.00**/1-4; **$4.00**/5+ each

Pick any four and save, Order Code **RB-7,** Cost **$16.00**

Large 12-color rainbow stamp pad, Order Code **RB-L**, Cost **$14.50**/1-4; **$11.95**/5+. 3-color stamp pad *Advent/Christmas* (metalic gold, deep red and green), Order Code **RB-C**, Cost **$6.95**/1-4; **$5.95**/5+. 3-color stamp pad *Easter/Spring* (yellow, medium green and violet), Order Code **RB-S**, Cost **$6.95**/1-4; **$5.95**/5+

Custom T-Shirts

Order your custom imprinted clothing for all of your church group's needs. Identify your group in style with your own design on T-Shirts.

High Quality Hanes 50/50 Premium Heavyweight T-Shirts

	12-23	24-35	36-71	72-143	144+
White Shirts	$7.25	$6.85	$6.10	$5.35	$4.70
Colored Shirts	$9.88	$8.65	$7.75	$6.80	$6.00

Price includes one color imprint on S-XL shirts.* Please add $1.75 for XXL Shirts. Design can be on front <u>or</u> back. Maximum size 12"x14"

Set Up Charges

*$12.50 per ink color (minimum set up charge for all orders)

$5.75 Art charge for straight line type (up to 4 Lines), $10.00 art charge for arched type, no art charge for camera ready design.

Shirt colors-white, ash, black, cardinal, navy, purple, royal blue, red, forest green, light blue

Ink colors-gray, red, navy, green, purple, blue, light blue, gold, royal blue

Please allow four weeks for delivery.

Order code: **SH-W** for white, **SH-C** for colors.

Call 1-800-325-9414 to receive detailed order information via U.S. Mail.

Type Styles

Avant Garde

Garomond

Helvetica

Century

ROCKFORD

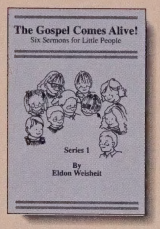
Children's Sermon Resource Kits

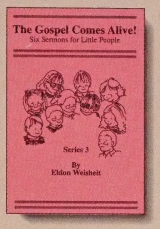
Eighteen sermons have been prepared by Pastor Eldon Weisheit, nationally known author of more than 15 books of children's sermons.

In each kit you receive **six sermons** in a small booklet and **10 each of the special resources** that fit the sermons ...no more last minute shopping or gathering things together. They all come to you in the **Children's Sermon Resource Kit**!

According to Pastor Weisheit, "These sermons are the kind that kids can easily relate to and, as we all know, many times we are able to preach to the adults through the children, touching upon the mystery that there is still something of the child in each of us...good thing! Because the kingdom of God belongs to little children."

For each of the kits, you can order extra units of the resources. Each extra unit brings you 10 more of the resources for each of the 6 sermons in the kit. Order Code **KE-1** (for series 1), **KE-2** (for series 2, **limited quantities!**) or **KE-3** (for series 3). Cost **$10** for each unit of 10 resources for each of the sermons in that kit, 60 resources in all.



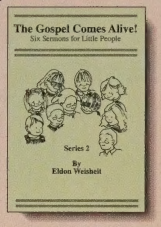


Series 1

6 sermons & resources for use Fall/Winter Order code **KK-1** Cost **$17.95**. Resources include:

• 6 sermon cards with cover • 10 ID cards • 10 posters • • 30 Thanksgiving stickers • 10 sheets of wrapping paper • • 30 Christmas napkins • 10 bedtime prayer cards •

Series 2 Limited Quantities!



6 sermons & resources for use Winter/Spring Order code **KK-2**. Cost **$17.95.** Resources include:

• 6 sermon cards with cover • 10 balloons • • 10 small bumper stickers • 10 post cards • • 20 Valentines & envelopes • 10 magic slates • • 30 fingerprint press-ons •

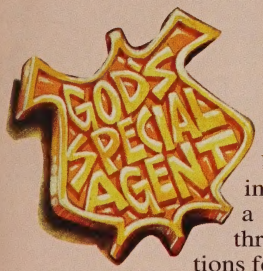
Series 3

6 sermons & resources for use throughout the year Order code **KK-3**. Cost **$17.95.** Resources include:

• 6 sermon cards with cover • 10 4-fold prayer cards • • 10 Grace/Faith Medallions • 20 "Thank You" Stickers • • 10 Huggable posters • 10 pin-on buttons • • 10 children's Gospel gift certificates •

Vacation Bible School 1995

God's Special Agents: Discovering Jesus in the Bible



The VBS program from CPH offers fun, faith-building lessons, plus colorful, lesson-reinforcing crafts and action-packed materials. It provides a 5-day program for six age levels—preschool through grade 8. (Director's Guide includes directions for expanding to 10-day program.) *God's Special Agents* takes kids sleuthing through the Bible to discover Jesus, their Savior and Friend. Every session focuses on basic Bible truths—why we need a Savior, God's Law, the Gospel message and our mission to share Jesus with others. Churched or unchurched students will learn about Jesus and grow in their relationship with Him.

The Student **Materials** feature:
- colorful, contemporary leaflets
- available all-school learning center, 1995 Storytelling Cube, and age-appropriate teaching aids such as videos and comic books

The **Teacher's Guides** feature:
- helps for even first-time teachers
- classroom preparation and personal devotional preparation
- visual aids and teaching extras

The **Director's Guide**, a step-by-step manual, features resources and tips for:
- goal-setting
- program development and planning calendar
- volunteer recruitment
- advertising and follow-up and much more

FREE VBS 16 page catalog of all CPH materials and support items (videos, books, music, adult VBS course, etc.) Order Code **VB-C**

VBS Starter Kit Order Code **VB-1** Special price: **$29.99** *(includes previews or samples of all items listed below—more than $68 of materials:)*
Preschool materials (ages 3-5)
Kindergarten (completed K.)
Primary (completed Grades 1-2) (12 handouts)
Junior (completed Grades 3-4)
Preteen (completed Grades 5-6)
Junior High (completed Grades 7-8)
Director's Guide
Teachers' Guides
Buddy Boxes have enough materials for two kids to complete a set of crafts for a 5-day VBS, with instructions and list of tools needed (scissors etc.) Available for each age level.

Special Worship Resources

Church Celebration Ornaments

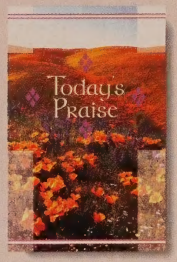
CUSTOMIZED FOR YOUR CHURCH

Custom-designed, pewter-finish ornaments of your church make wonderful gifts, remembrances for anniversaries, building dedications and other special events—a great fund raising idea, too. Approximately 2 1/2" in diameter, each ornament is rendered by an artist according to your specifications. Send a photo and/or sketch of your church and our designers will prepare a sketch for you, no cost or obligation. When you are completely satisfied with the design, then place your order. Order early; *allow at least 10 to 12 weeks for delivery.*

Order Code **CC-O**, Cost: 250/**$7.00** each, 500/**$5.50** each, 750/**$5.25** each, 1000/**$4.95** each. For orders less than 250 ornaments please call for a price quote.

Today's Praise

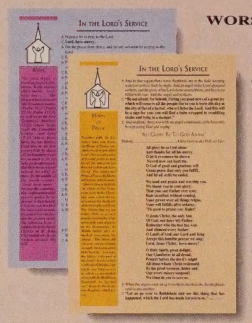
CONTEMPORARY LITURGY USING TRADITIONAL MELODIES



In keeping with the tradition—begun by Martin Luther and encouraged by many current worship books—of setting various portions of the liturgy to hymn tunes for the sake of variety and deeper understanding, **Today's Praise** offers seven such liturgical hymns employing classic melodies: • **Kyrie** to *Ebenezer* or *Hyfrydol* • **Gloria** to *Regent Square* • **Alleluia** to *Wie schoen leuchtet* • **Creed** to *Wachet auf* • **Sanctus** to *Nicea* • **Agnus Dei** to *Eventide* • **Thanksgiving** to *Sine Nomine.* A booklet containing all the music accompanies each order of 50 or more. The attractive worship folder may be used again and again, and parishioners will appreciate not having to learn "unfamiliar new chants" to sing their accustomed praises. Order Code **TP-1**. Cost **$9.90**/100, **$40**/500. Min. order of 50.

In the Lord's Worship

LITANIES FOR WORSHIP–ABOUT WORSHIP



In The Lord's Service is a set of eighteen bulletin insert-litanies, designed for worship, each highlighting a part of the Sunday worship service—from Invocation through Benediction. With historical texts (the Didache, Serapion...), and familiar hymnody, they help answer such questions as, "Why do we say these words in the service?" and "This sounds like a Scripture verse, which one is it?" Perfect for adding meaningful variety to the liturgy, they are welcome during the Sundays after Pentecost, or during other seasons. Plus, they serve as a focal point for a Bible Study series—parishioners learn as they worship! Each order includes notes and music.

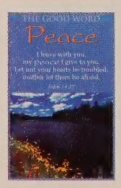
Order Codes: Invocation (**LL-A**), Confession & Absolution (**LL-B**), Entrance Song (**LL-C**), Kyrie (**LL-D**), Hymn of Praise (**LL-E**), Salutation & Collect (**LL-F**), Holy Scripture (**LL-G**), Hymnody (**LL-H**), Sermon (**LL-I**), Creed (**LL-J**), Prayers (**LL-K**), Offering (**LL-L**), Preface & Sanctus (**LL-M**), Words of Institution (**LL-N**), Peace (**LL-O**), Agnus Dei (**LL-P**), Post Communion Canticle (**LL-Q**), Benediction (**LL-R**).

Order all eighteen litanies in sets–50 of each for **$21**, 100 of each for **$39**, or 300 of each for **$99**. Order Code **LL-S**

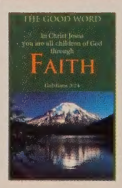
Or, order four of the litanies (you pick which four) in sets–50 of each for **$9**, 100 of each for **$16**, or 300 of each for **$43**. Use the Order Codes listed above (choose four). **Or, simply order a copyright release** for all eighteen—you will still receive the notes for leaders, plus camera ready copies of the eighteen litanies for **$25**. Order Code **LL-T**

Helps for the Church in Ministry at the Hospital and Nursing Home

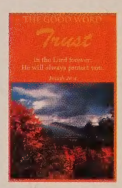
Good Word Table Tents



GW-1



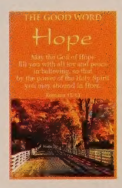
GW-2



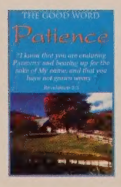
GW-3

GW-4

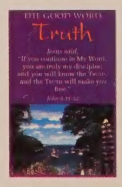
GW-5



GW-6



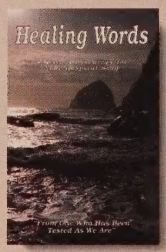
GW-7



GW-8

Shut-ins and nursing home residents often appreciate it if the pastor can "leave a little something" after each visit. **The Good Word** is a series of eight different cards; each one emphasizing the assurance offered in a single Biblical word—which might well serve as the basis of a bedside devotion. Each card can be folded into a standing **"table tent"**—an ongoing visible reminder of **The Good Word** you share from God. Sold individually or in a sample packet which includes three of each table tent (for a total of 24 cards)—order a set for each person on your visitation list. Prices: **$.33** each/1-24 cards, **$.30** each/25+ cards. Sample packet (24 cards) Order Code **GW-P**, Cost, **$7.00**.

Healing Words



Healing Words is a resource designed specifically for ministry to those in your parish who are hospitalized. With larger-than-normal print, items kept brief, and an upbeat approach to the ministry of medicine, **Healing Words** seeks to build up the spiritual resources of the patient through such pertinent features as:

• **Bible readings** • **Brief devotions** • **Prayers** • **Poetry** • **A Peanuts cartoon with a theological accent** • **An "Ask the Chaplain" column**

Healing Words is available quarterly. Since the booklets are not dated on the cover, back issues can be used anytime. Orders will be accepted quarterly or for 1 year subscriptions. Bulk orders are shipped postpaid, **one month in advance**. Order Code **HW-1 for a single quarter's issue or HW-2 for a 1 year subscription** .

Prices per issue: **$.74** each/5-9 copies, **$.66** each/10-19 copies, **$.55** each 20-49 copies, **$.45** each/50-99 copies, **$.39** each/100-199 copies, **$.24** each/1000+ copies.

Note: For chaplains or pastors ordering **50+ issues quarterly**, the back cover can be custom-imprinted with type and line art (your logo). Imprint orders must be sent by mail. Imprint rates: **$.04** each/50-99 copies, **$.0375** each/100-199 copies, **$.0325** each/200-299 copies. Additional discounts are available for larger quantities. Please inquire for details

NEW THIS YEAR!

Creative Sunday School Recognition System - Colorful and Inexpensive

With this special recognition program each child begins with an enrollment pin (Code: L-00). At the end of the first year, the one year pin is given (Code: L-01). A new pin is given at the end of each year of enrollment. This system eliminates the worry of pupils losing pins.

Enrollment pin shown actual size, numbered pins are same size as enrollment pin.

L-01 THRU L-03

Pins L-00 - L-10

To order specify code (**L-00**-enrollment or **L-01** through **L-10**-year pins) and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$.69**/1-9 pins, **$.59**/10-24 pins, **$.55**/25-49 pins, **$.53**/50-99 pins, **$.49**/100+ pins. You may mix pins for larger discount.

Pins L-11 - L-17

Recognize the various ministries in your Parish with these new service lapel pins. These recognition pins are **gold plated with enamel colors** and are gift boxed. All service lapel pins pictured above can be mixed to receive quantity discount pricing.
To order specify code and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$3.50**/1-9 pins, **$2.99**/10-24 pins, **$2.79**/25-49 pins, **$2.69**/50-99 pins, **$2.49**/100+ pins.

Pins L-20 - L-44

Recognize members for the services they offer with these service pins. Same design and color apply to each pin. Pins can be mixed to receive quantity discount pricing. To order specify code and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$3.00**/1-9 pins, **$2.50**/10-24 pins, **$2.39**/25-49 pins, **$2.29**/50-99 pins, **$2.19**/100+ pins.

Order Codes:

L-20 Acolyte
L-21 Altar Server
L-24 Choir
L-25 Confirmation
L-26 Educator
L-27 Eucharistic Minister
L-28 Godparent
L-29 Hospitality
L-30 Lay Minister
L-31 Lay Reader
L-32 Lay Visitor
L-33 Lector
L-34 Minister of Care
L-35 Pastoral Care
L-37 Secretary
L-38 Service
L-39 Sponsor
L-40 Treasurer
L-41 Usher
L-42 Volunteer
L-43 Youth Choir
L-44 Youth Minister

Confirmation/First Communion Gifts

Pins L-45 - L-47

Recognize the confirmands in your Parish with these new Confirmation lLapel pins. Recognition pins L-45 & L-46 are **gold plated with enamel colors** and are gift boxed. Recognition pin L-47 is made from pewter. All lapel pins pictured above can be mixed with any of the service lapel pins (L-11 – L-17) to receive quantity discount pricing. To order specify code and quantity of each pin needed. Cost: **$3.50**/1-9 pins, **$2.99**/10-24 pins, **$2.79**/25-49 pins, **$2.69**/50-99 pins, **$2.49**/100+ pins.

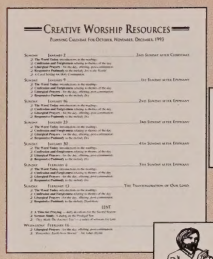
Personal Pendants for Special Occasions

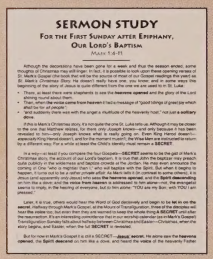
This Jerusalem Cross is made of heavy die struck bronze on a brown cord and comes gift boxed. Order Code: **L-18** Cost: **$5.00**/1-3, **$4.49**/4-10, **$3.99**/ 11+

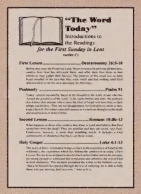
This contemporary cross is die struck bronze with enamel colors and comes with a 24 inch gold plated chain (gift boxed). Verse on back is Isaiah 43:1, "I have called you by your name you are mine." Order Code: **L-19** Cost: **$8.50**/1-3, **$7.99**/4-10, **$7.49**/11+

This Book Mark is made of pewter on a blue grosgrain ribbon and comes gift boxed. The verse is Proverbs 3:9, "In All Thy Ways" Order Code: **L-48** Cost: **$5.00**/1-3, **$4.49**/4-10, **$3.99**/ 11+

Creative Worship Resources







Brighten your worship services throughout the year with **Creative Worship Resources**—simple enough for any size congregation.

Order by the quarter or save by ordering for a year. Shipped one month in advance of each quarter, you will receive fresh worship ideas for each Sunday—accenting the liturgy or season and involving your congregation in recognizing non-liturgical holidays too significant to neglect.

Responsive Litanies, Prayers, Clip Art and more!

Each quarter you will receive:

- **A Planning Calendar**, listing possible worship accents
- **Litanies, dramatic readings, and responsive prayers—all supplied typeset for reproduction, copying or retyping.** Participants receive copyright releases to use the material in their parish.
- **Artwork and titles** for bulletins and parish newsletters
- **Creative life-centered prayers** (on filecards for easy use and retrieval)
- **Prayer Pages**—devotions to begin church meetings
- **And Much More**

Cost per quarter $30—that's just $10 per month! Or, save **$21** and receive **Creative Worship Resources** on a regular basis for a full year. Cost: **$99**.

CX-1 January-March '95—(Epiphany & Lent)
CX-2 April-June '95—(available in March)
CX-5 full year—(beginning January '95)
CX-6 full year—(beginning April '95)

A sample of **Creative Worship Resources** is yours for the asking, **FREE!** Order Code **CY-F**.

Clip Art

Spruce up your bulletins, newsletters and other church publications with **Clip Art** from Creative Worship Resources...**subscribe** on a yearly basis. Each quarter you will receive 8 full-sized 8 1/2x11 pages on glossy paper...ideal for reproduction. Lots and lots of images with seasonal accents: Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and more. **Creative Communications Clip Art** is unique in that it includes seasonal bulletin mastheads for each Sunday.

One year subscription cost (4 quarters), **$19.95**, Order Code **BW-1** (begins with the January through March quarter)

Not your ordinary clip art!

• ImagePak—Matthew*	47 pages	$17.50	IP-1
• ImagePak—Mark*	32 pages	$17.50	IP-2
• ImagePak—Luke*	54 pages	$17.50	IP-3
• ImagePak—John*	46 pages	$17.50	IP-4
• ImagePak—The Four Gospels*	187 pages	$59.00	IP-5
• ImagePak—Pictograms	30 pages	$10.50	IP-6
• ImagePak—Hohmann Pictograms	26 pages	$10.50	IP-7
• ImagePak—Design Elements	20 pages	$7.00	IP-8
• ImagePak—Entire Set*	263 pages	$79.00	IP-A
• The Image Book—Set bound w/index*	272 pages	$49.00	IP-9

*8-page ImagePak—Supplemental Holidays FREE with purchase of any two of the Gospels. Total set features over 2500 verbal and visual images featuring more than 100 artists, many with international reputations. Size: 8-1/2" x 11" individual sheets. C.I. Publishing, Inc., Hickory, North Carolina

ImagePak Clip Art

The four Gospel ImagePaks have a full page of visual & verbal images for each Gospel lesson in the 3-year lectionary—averaging more than 5 illustrations and 4 text units per Gospel reading

ImagePak Pictograms: 30 pages of high-quality reproducible Christian art portraying church events, stations of the cross, disciples, Gospel readings, and much more.

ImagePak Design Elements: 144 eye-catching graphics.

ImagePak Hohmann Pictograms: symbols for each Epistle lesson by acclaimed European woodcut artist Johannes Hohmann

Image America Church Newsletter Program

"ImageAmerica is, hands down, the best help a church newsletter ever had."

New, exceptional clip art and compelling text for your church and school publications *now available by subscription*. Receive 60-70 pieces of professional art each month, many focusing on the church year. Also short spiritually-oriented commentaries, columns, humor, social issues, calendar, photos and children's cartoon. A total of 240 pages a year. Order Code **IP-C**. Order now and receive your first issue **FREE**. Annual subscription to be paid in quarterly payments of **$24.95** each beginning with second issue. Cost:**$35.95** for electronic version; Macintosh version Order Code **IP-M**, PC compatible version for use with WordPerfect Order Code **IP-P**, PC compatible version for use with all other programs Order Code **IP-R**.

NEW THIS YEAR! Coordinated Christian Stationery

- Personal stationery for every use
  - Contemporary Christian designs in color
    - 100% recycled paper and matching envelopes

You'll find the right stationery for any writing need among these five different sized stationery items on cream colored stock:

- Monarch-sized stationery (7 x 10") 15 printed sheets, 15 blank sheets and 15 envelopes per pack, Cost **$5.95**
- Petite notes (4 1/4 x 5 1/2") 12 notes and 12 envelopes per pack, Cost **$4.95**
- Notecards (3 1/2 x 6") 25 cards and 25 envelopes per pack, Cost **$3.95**
- Postalettes (4 x 6" folded) 15 cards and 15 seals per pack, Cost **$3.50**
- Postcards (4 1/8 x 5 7/8") 15 cards per pack, Cost **$2.95**

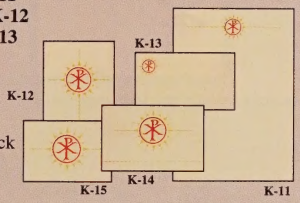
All sizes are available with one of the five contemporary two-color designs shown here.

- **CHI RHO**
- **GOD BLESS YOU**
- **GRACE AND PEACE**
- **GREEK CROSS**
- **MODERN CROSS**

You may order **packs of any one sized item** with your choice of one design. *Save 15%* when you *order* ***sets featuring any one design*** *including all five sizes of stationery.* To order a set, use the set Order Code. Cost **$18.50**

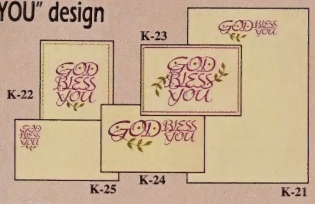
CHI RHO design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-11**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-12**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-13**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-14**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-15**
CHI RHO set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-10**



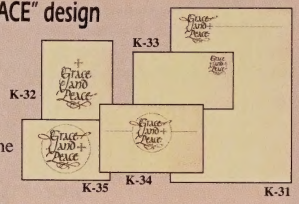
"GOD BLESS YOU" design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-21**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-22**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-23**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-24**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-25**
GOD BLESS YOU set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-20**



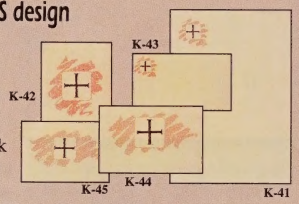
"GRACE AND PEACE" design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-31**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-32**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-33**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-34**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-35**
GRACE AND PEACE set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-30**



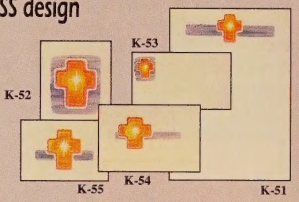
GREEK CROSS design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-41**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-42**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-43**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-44**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-45**
GREEK CROSS set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-40**



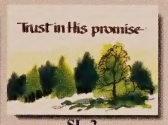
MODERN CROSS design

Monarch pack, Order Code **K-51**
Petite note pack, Order Code **K-52**
Notecard pack, Order Code **K-53**
Postalette pack, Order Code **K-54**
Postcard pack, Order Code **K-55**
MODERN CROSS set includes one pack of each size, Order Code **K-50**



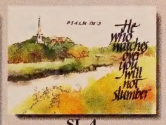
Seasons of Life Cards NEW THIS YEAR!

SL-1

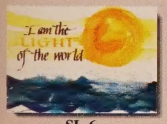


SL-2

SL-5



SL-4



SL-6

SL-7

SL-3

SL-8

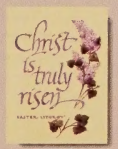
Bring caring words of faith to comfort and support those facing a terminal illness, tragedy or personal crisis with these entirely new note cards. Graced by Sally Beck's art, each 4 1/2 x 5 3/4" card features an appropriate greeting. Matching envelopes included. Assortment of 8 cards or 8 of one design *(see individual cards for Order Codes)*, Cost **$5.95.** Order code for **assortment** (1 each of 8 cards) **SL-F**.

SL-1 *"May the LORD make you strong. Your strength, your endurance, your patience are gifts from God—and a beautiful witness to all who know you. You are in our prayers."* plus Col. 1:11-12. **SL-2** *"Trust in His promise. The Lord who sees your weary heart will bear your burden and give you peace. Trust in that promise."* plus Mt. 11:28. **SL-3** *"Under the shadow of your wings. May you know the protecting power and love of Jesus Christ in this difficult time."* plus Ps. 36:7. **SL-4** *"He who watches over you will not slumber—Ps. 121:3. May our Lord who loves you dearly give you peaceful days and quiet nights. This is our prayer for you."* **SL-5** *"I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me. We pray that you will feel the light and love of our Lord in your present darkness."* plus Ps. 23:4." **SL-6** *"I am the LIGHT of the world. May the light of Christ brighten every corner of your life and heart."* plus John 8:12. **SL-7** *"The hand of Christ touch you—hold you—lead you to your heavenly home."* plus Ps. 73:23-4. **SL-8** *"You comfort me and make me glad, Lord. May God the Father uphold you; May Christ our Lord enfold you; May the Spirit give you peace."* plus Ps. 94:19.

NEW THIS YEAR! Easter Cards

ED-1

ED-2

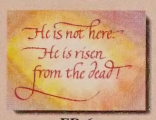


ED-3

ED-4

These new Easter cards express the true meaning of the season through colorful art and Christ-centered messages. Matching envelopes are included for these 6 1/8 x 41/2" cards. Assortment of 10 cards or 10 of one design (see cards for Order Codes). Cost **$6.00**. Assortment Order Code **ED-X**.

ED-5



ED-6

ED-7

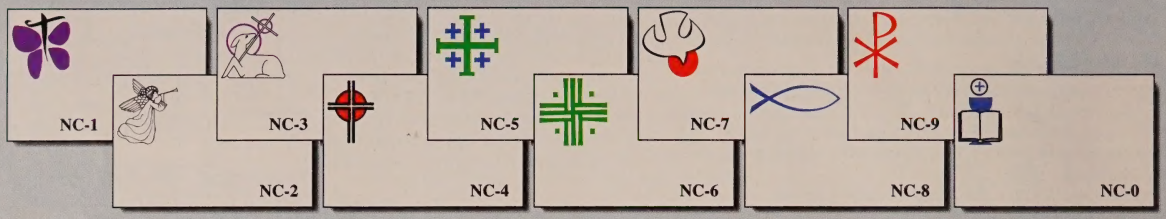
ED-8

ED-9

ED-0

ED-1 *"Easter blessings of joy and peace be yours, alleluia."* **ED-2** *"May Christ's resurrection bring you peace and joy."* **ED-3** *"May Easter be a time of celebration and a fount of joy throughout the year."* **ED-4** *"May Easter's joy and peace be yours."* **ED-5** *"May the Easter Alleluia always linger softly in your heart and soul."* **ED-6** *"Alleluia. May the hope and joy of this Easter Mystery fill your hearts."* **ED-7** *"May Christ our light always brighten our lives. Happy Easter."* **ED-8** *"Jesus lives! May his victory fill your heart with renewed hope and love. A blessed Easter."* **ED-9** *"May Christ's resurrection renew your hope for a loving world. Easter blessings."* **ED-0** *"Christ's victory is ours, Christ's risen life is ours, Alleluia."*

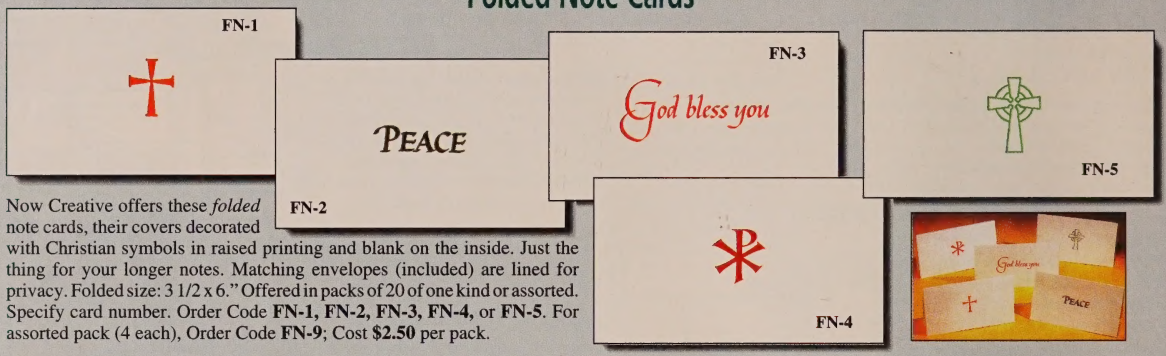
Creative Note Cards



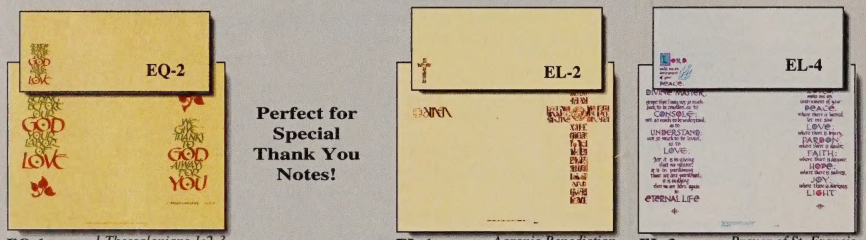
Creative Note Cards—*just right for the church office, school, home, personal use or as gifts.* Convenient for those brief reminders and thank you notes, these cards will suit your needs. Creative offers ten note cards with a choice of Christian symbols in color on white card stock. Designs are available individually or assorted. Note cards are 3 1/2" x 6" and come with matching envelopes.

100 Assorted cards (ten of each design) with envelopes, Order Code **NX-1**, Cost **$5.95;** 25 cards of one design (specify Order Code): Cost **$1.95**

Folded Note Cards

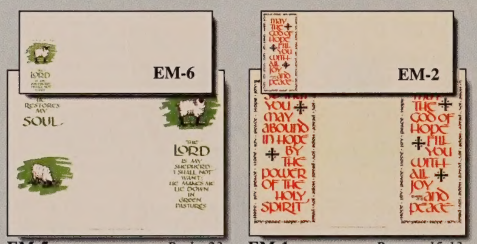


Now Creative offers these *folded* note cards, their covers decorated with Christian symbols in raised printing and blank on the inside. Just the thing for your longer notes. Matching envelopes (included) are lined for privacy. Folded size: 3 1/2 x 6." Offered in packs of 20 of one kind or assorted. Specify card number. Order Code **FN-1, FN-2, FN-3, FN-4,** or **FN-5**. For assorted pack (4 each), Order Code **FN-9**; Cost **$2.50** per pack.



Perfect for Special Thank You Notes!

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 — *Aaronic Benediction* — *Prayer of St. Francis*



Psalm 23 — *Romans 15:13*

Philippians 4:4 — *Philippians 1:7* — *John 3:16* — *I Corinthians 13*

Pastoral Epistle Letterhead

Pastoral Epistle Letterhead—This unique parish resource provides stock sheets that can be used for a variety of parish messages. They also work perfectly for personal and special notes from the clergy. Sold in 50s and shipped flat, on special laid stock—ideal for mimeograph or offset. Matching envelopes can also be ordered. Letterhead cost: **$7**/100, **$32**/500, **$60**/1000; Envelope cost: **$7**/100, **$32**/500, **$60**/1000

Sampler Packet (75 each of four letterheads) 300 letterheads in all; Order Code **EL-L**, Cost: **$20**; Sampler Packet (75 each of four envelopes) 300 envelopes in all; Order Code **EL-E**, Cost: **$20**

Please be sure to specify which four letterheads and envelopes you wish to order.

IDEAL FOR:

- Weddings
- Bereavement
- Confirmation
- Birthdays
- Sickness/Shut-ins
- New Members
- Baptisms
- Personal Notes

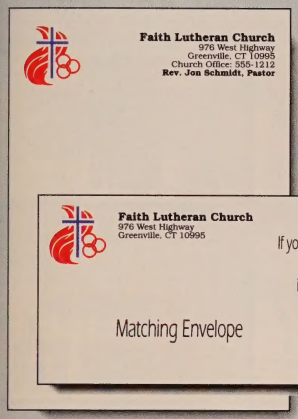
Colorful Custom Imprinted Stationery for your Church

▪ CHOICE OF PAPERS ▪ DENOMINATION LOGO, IN TWO COLORS, AT NO EXTRA COST
▪ MATCHING ENVELOPES AND BUSINESS CARDS ▪ MEMO PADS ▪ CUSTOM DESIGNS AVAILABLE

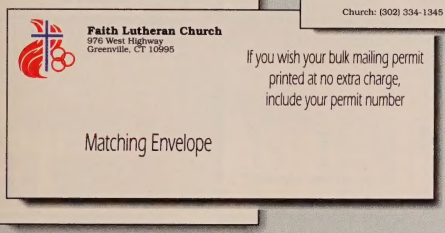
Now you can afford multicolor letterhead and envelopes printed on fine, white paper, either our 24# watermarked 25% cotton bond or our 24# wove (suitable for copier and mimeo). Business cards are printed on 65# card stock; memo pads on white stock. Your personalized imprint (in black) can include church name, address, phone(s) and name(s) of pastor(s). **At no extra charge, Creative can print custom designs and imprint your parish logo in *one* color—(red, blue, green, or black— shown below).** (Send us a clear copy of your logo. Logos on memo pads are printed in **black** only.) The denominational logos below are available in ***two*** colors as shown.

Denominational Stationery

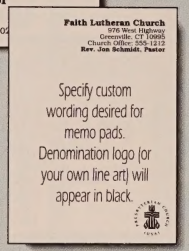
Letterhead



Business Card

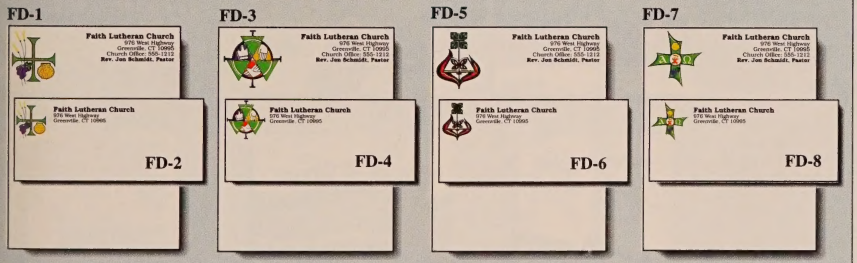


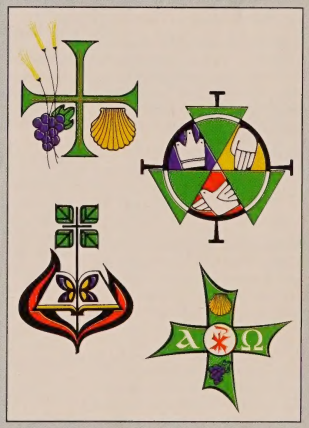
Memo Pads



TWO-COLOR DENOMINATIONAL LOGOS

Faith Design™ Letterhead





***Faith Design*™ Letterhead**—Any church can make a better impression with one of our new *faith-design*™ letterheads and matching envelopes. Featuring familiar symbols of the Christian faith in color and a variety of styles, these designs may be ordered on the same fine paper stock and at the same prices as our other stationery. Of course, custom imprinting (in black) to your specifications is included. (*Sorry, matching memo pads or business cards not available.)*

HOW TO ORDER:

1 Clearly **print or type out the exact wording you require,** as you wish it to appear on your letterhead, envelope, business card and/or memo pad.
2 Make a photocopy of this page and on it **circle the logo** you wish on your stationery. For custom designs, attach a clear copy of your logo and **specify the color** desired.
3 **Circle the quantities** you wish for each item.
4 **Mail with completed order form** on the last page of this catalog. *(Do not fax.)*

LETTERHEAD
24#, 25% cotton; Order Code **PL-9**
$44.95/500
$54.95/1000
$29.95/additional 1000s

24#, multi-purpose wove; Order Code **PL-0**
$39.95/500
$49.95/1000
$24.95/additional 1000s

MATCHING 2ND SHEETS
25% cotton,
Order Code **PV-B; $15.00**/500
Multi-purpose wove,
Order Code **PV-M; $12.00**/500

MATCHING #10 ENVELOPES
White, with logo in color, your imprint in black.
24#, 25% cotton, Order Code **PE-9**
$49.95/500
$64.95/1000
$48.95/additional 1000s

24#, multi-purpose wove,
Order Code **PE-0**
$36.95/500
$49.95/1000
$34.95/additional 1000s

BUSINESS CARDS
white, 2 x 3 1/2", 65# stock; color logo, black imprint; Order Code, **PC-9**
$20/200 cards
$30/500 cards
$45/1000 cards

MEMO PADS
5 1/2 x 8 1/2", white paper, 150 sheets each, black imprint, Order Code, **PM-9**
$5.95/2 pads
$8.95/4 pads
(Please include your phone number on the order form so we may call you if necessary!)

Parish Occasion Cards

THIRTEEN NEW CARDS NOW AVAILABLE INCLUDING BAPTISM BIRTHDAY CARDS

Parish Occasion Cards offer beautiful and convenient ways to send heart-felt messages to members and visitors of your church. Appropriate for a variety of common occasions, the cards feature colorful cover art on fine quality off-white stock; inside, a brief message and Scripture verse, plus plenty of space for a personal message.

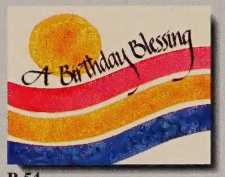
CARDS CAN BE CUSTOM IMPRINTED with your pastor/parish name, address, phone, etc. (See the instructions for imprinted products on the page 35. Sorry, no phone orders on imprint orders.) You may combine any number of the different cards to reach a quantity discount price. Specify Order Code(s) for design(s) desired. Cards are 4 3/8" x 5 3/4" supplied flat with **quality, matching envelopes.** ***Please Note:*** *Cards with order codes underlined measure 5" x 6 7/8".*

Cost: **Imprinted $.65** each/25-49; **$.55** each/50-99, **$.45** each/100+. **Without imprint $.57** each/25-49, **$.47** each/50-99, **$.40** each/100+.

P-51

P-52

P-53



P-54

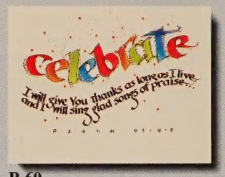
P-55

P-56

P-57

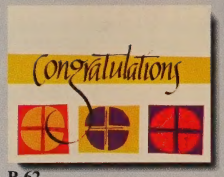
P-58

P-59



P-60

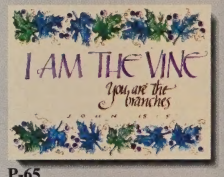
P-61



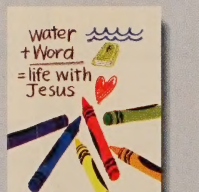
P-62

P-63

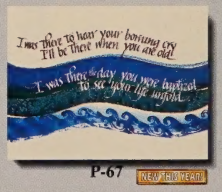
P-64



P-65



P-66 NEW THIS YEAR!



P-67 NEW THIS YEAR!

P-68 NEW THIS YEAR!

Thank You Cards

Friend in Christ (for visitors) *"A new face, a new friend in Christ! Thank you for sharing your faith in our worship service. Please come again."* plus *Ps. 122:1.* Order Code with imprinting **P-11**; without imprinting **P-51.**

Thank you for worshipping with us (for visitors) *"Our songs of praise were more joyful today because your voice joined ours—Please come again!* plus *Ps. 95:1.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-12***; without imprinting ***P-52***.

Thank you (for volunteer appreciation, departing members) *"Your special gifts to our Christian family will always be remembered—We thank you in His name."* plus *I Thess. 1:2-3.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-13***; without imprinting ***P-53***.

Birthday Cards (See Stewardship Program)

A Birthday Blessing *"God gives us the gift of life— God gives us the gift of life in Christ— God gave us the gift of you. We rejoice with you as you celebrate your birthday."* Order Code with imprinting **P-14;** without imprinting **P-54**

Enjoy your special day *"We share the joy of your special day, For God made you in a special way, And we are thankful."* Order Code with imprinting **P-15**; without imprinting **P-55**

Birthday Blessings (from the church to a child) *"Your church family joins with you in saying thank you to Jesus for giving you the gift of life."* plus *Is. 43:1,4.* Order Code with imprinting **P-16**; without imprinting **P-56**.

NEW THIS YEAR! **Baptism**

I was there to hear your borning cry...I'll be there when you are old...I was there the day you were baptized...to see your life unfold. *"The Lord indeed is with you every day of your life and on this, your special day. Happy Baptismal Birthday."* Order Code with imprinting **P-27**; without imprinting **P-67**

I have called you by name; you are mine. *"Remember! you are chosen, and you are loved. Happy Baptism Birthday"* Order Code with imprinting **P-28**; without imprinting **P-68**

Water + Word = Life with Jesus. *"Water + Word = Life in Christ. Happy Life-in-Christ Day! Happy Baptism Birthday!"* plus Galatians 3:27. Code with imprinting **P-26**; without imprinting **P-66**

Cards for Other Occasions

Welcome to your new home (for persons new to your community) *"We are glad you made our community your home. We hope you will make our church your spiritual home."* plus *Prov. 26:10.* Order Code with imprinting **P-17**; without imprinting **P-57**.

Be at Peace (for shut-ins) *"...in the promises of a faithful God and the love of your family in Christ. We miss your smile, your laughter, your song of faith. You are with us in spirit, in our prayers, in our hearts."* plus *Rom. 15:13.* Order Code with imprinting **P-18**; without imprinting **P-58**

May you know God's healing touch (for persons recovering from illness, surgery, etc.) *"The Lord has promised loving care— We promise you our faithful prayer. We look forward to your return to health."* plus *Jer. 17:14.* Order Code with imprinting **P-19**; without imprinting **P-59**

Celebrate (anniversary) *"Your friends in Christ rejoice with you as you celebrate this day of remembered blessing."* plus *Ps. 63:4-5.* Order Code with imprinting **P-20**; without imprinting **P-60**

Welcome (for a new baby) *"You have a new blessing from the Lord! We welcome your new family member—and ours. Love and best wishes from your family in Christ."* plus *Ps. 127:3.* Order Code with imprinting **P-21**; without imprinting **P-61**

Congratulations! (for milestones and achievements) *"Our happy songs of thanks we raise to sing with you our Father's praise. Your family in Christ rejoices with you."* plus *Eph. 1:3.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-22***; without imprinting ***P-62***.

Remembering You (for shut-ins, those at a distance, or anniversary of a loss) *"You are a special part of our family in Christ—You are remembered with love."* plus *Heb. 13:5.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-23***; without imprinting ***P-63***.

Our Lord Be With You (for loss, illness or other crisis) *"We look to our LORD for strength and healing—we look to each other to see our LORD in action. You are in our prayers."* plus *Phil. 4:19-20.* Order Code with imprinting ***P-24***; without imprinting ***P-64***.

I am the Vine, You are the branches (for persons who have not attended worship) *"We miss the special blessings you give our church family when you worship with us. Please join us this Sunday."* plus *1 Thess. 1:2-3.* Order Code with imprinting **P-25**; without imprinting **P-65**.

PLEASE NOTE!

Order codes listed under the card illustration are for **non-imprinted** cards. Please look in the text above for the appropriate code if you desire **imprinted** cards. **See page 35 for imprint instructions.**

"I Am Blessed" focus on parishioners' birthdays as personal occasions for special giving. Flexible, the program can be used to support the general fund, special projects or organizations. Creative Communications annually supplies two new colorful birthday cards, one to be sent by the pastor (**P-54**), the other by a congregational representive (**P-55**) along with a remittance envelope. Our printed message describes a birthday as a prime time to look back over the years and show thankfulness for God's blessings by a special contribution. Your note specifies the purpose for which the contribution will be used. We supply a letter that may be used by the congregational representative explaining the program, plus 12 monthly paragraphs and a longer article on the program for the church newsletter. Cards may be custom imprinted with church address, etc.

Stewardship Birthday Cards (in sets of two designs, one each for pastor and church representative) with matching envelopes. Please order in increments of 25 sets. Order Code *without custom imprint* **BC-W** Cost: 25 sets/**$.84 each**; 50 sets/**$.69 each**; 100+ sets/**$.65 each**. Order Code *with custom imprint* **BC-X** Cost: 25 sets/**$.98 each**; 50 sets/**$.81 each**; 100+ sets/**$.75 each**.

Remittance Envelopes imprinted with *"A Birthday Offering: I AM BLESSED.* (Not available with custom imprinting.) Order Code **OE-B** Cost **$5**/100; **$20**/500.

"Rejoice in the Lord!" Custom Imprinted Certificates

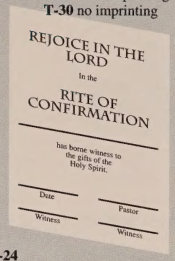
Just the right way to recognize special milestones in the Christian life of members of your congregation! **"Rejoice in the Lord"** certificates create a memorable record of the special occasion ... and the Word of God included in each certificate puts the accent in just the right place.

These **Custom Imprinted Certificates** are unique as well as economical! You can combine any number of the 10 different certificates to reach a quantity discount price. **"Rejoice in the Lord"** certificates are printed on fine quality off-white paper and come with matching envelopes. The certificate is imprinted with the church and pastor's name ... or with other wording of your choice. The certificate size is 7" x 10" when open and 7" x 5" when folded. Please see page 35 for special instructions that apply to imprinted materials—space is provided there for your imprint information. Sorry, no phone orders—all imprint orders must be mailed to us. **Certificates may also be ordered with no imprinting.**

Cost with imprinting: **$.65** each/25-34, **$.55** each/35-50, and **$.45** each/51+. Cost without imprinting: **$.57** each/25-34, **$.47** each/35-50, and **$.45** each/51+. **Includes a mailing envelope.**

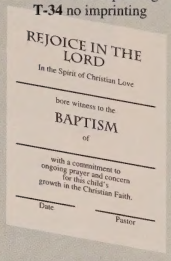
Confirmation
Inside: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

T-10 with imprinting
T-30 no imprinting



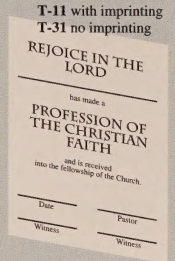
Baptismal Sponsor
Inside: Ephesians 3:16-17

T-14 with imprinting
T-34 no imprinting



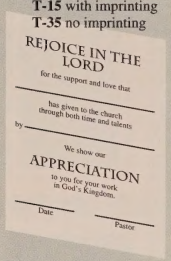
Profession of Faith
Inside: 2 Peter 3:18

T-11 with imprinting
T-31 no imprinting



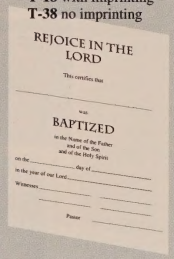
Special Thanks
Inside: 1 Thessalonians 1:3

T-15 with imprinting
T-35 no imprinting



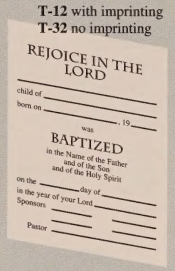
Adult Baptism
Inside: Romans 6:4

T-18 with imprinting
T-38 no imprinting



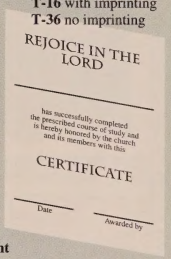
Baptism
Inside: Romans 6:4

T-12 with imprinting
T-32 no imprinting

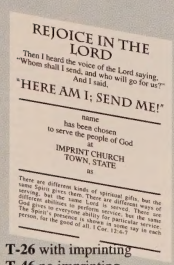


Religious Ed. Accomplishment
Inside: Colossians 1:9-10

T-16 with imprinting
T-36 no imprinting

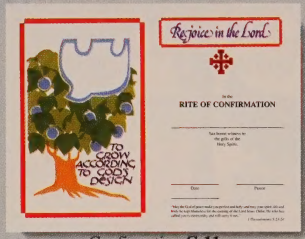


Appointment
Inside: Corinthians 12:4-7


REJOICE IN THE LORD
Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said,
"HERE AM I; SEND ME!"
name
has been chosen to serve the people of God
at
IMPRINT CHURCH
TOWN, STATE
as
There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different ways to perform service, but the same God gives in everyone ability for particular service. Concerning spiritual gifts, I want you to know the truth. Now there's everyone ability for particular service, but the same God gives in everyone ability for particular service. There's everyone ability for particular service, but the same God gives in everyone ability for particular service. There's everyone ability for particular service, but the same God gives in everyone ability for particular service. There

Personalized Certificates

Confirmation **C-10**

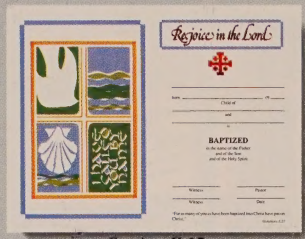


Confirmation **C-11**

Profession of Faith **C-12**

Profession of Faith **C-13**

Baptism **C-14**



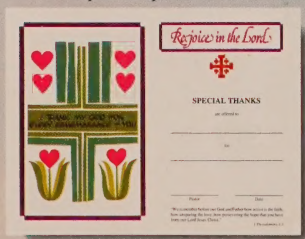
Baptism **C-15**

Marriage **C-16**

Marriage **C-17**

Baptismal Sponsor **C-18**

Baptismal Sponsor **C-19**



Special Thanks **C-20**

Religious Ed. Accomplishment **C-21**

"Rejoice in the Lord" Personalized certificates... Individually imprinted with your church name and foil stamped with the cross in gold.

Here is a series of 8 1/2"x11" presentation certificates **custom imprinted with the name of your church.** One series offers contemporary symbols while the other features inspirational photography—both are printed on high quality sturdy stock and are suitable for framing.

All certificates may be mixed to bring you the maximum quantity discount. Please see the special ordering instructions on page 35. "Rejoice in the Lord" customized certificates provide a lasting reminder of those "high points" in Christian experience.

Orders for certificates **must be sent in by mail.** See the instructions on page 35.

Cost of imprinted certificates:

$10/25,
$19/50,
$35/100,
$140/500

Certificates may also be ordered without imprinting. *Blank certificates are sent immediately. To order* ***blank*** *certificates, substitute a* ***"B"*** *for the* ***"C"*** *listed in the Order Code. Imprinted certificates take 4-5 weeks.*

Cost of certificates without imprints.

$8/25,
$15/50,
$30/100,
$120/500

Cost of matching envelopes:

$4/25, **$6**/50, **$8**/100, **$38**/500

Envelope order code **CE-N**

Personalized Pew Cards

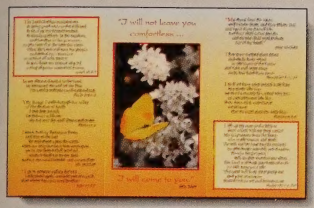
PT-P
Series

PY-P
Series

These colorful custom imprinted **Pew Cards** present the variety of services in ministry you offer to members and extend a special welcome to visitors. The top portion of the personalized Pew Card is torn off and kept as a gift bookmark and record of attendance. The bottom portion is returned to the church office. You receive equal quantities of all four colorful designs (either series)—each with a different picture on the front and Bible passage on the back. The church and pastor's name are custom imprinted on the front. Price for either series **$10**/100, **$40**/500, **$70**/1000

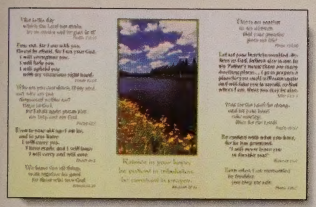
Special Care Cards

Whether it be the death of a loved one, or a new life in a family, these Care Cards remind the recipient that God is present, and that God's people care.



A Card For Comfort

This new card points to the comfort of God's Word at the time of ultimate loss and victory. The **Comfort Care Card** uses Scripture to emphasize God's remembered promises of comfort, hope, and eternity.
Order Code 1-BC

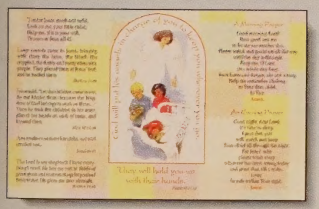


A Card For Cheer

The promises of God offer comfort and new hope to those who are confined. For times "when every day seems the same," the **Cheer Care Card** can lift the spirit and open the heart to brighter thoughts.
Order Code 1-CC

A Card For A New Child

Quotes from Scripture help the recipient of the **Maternity Care Card** to recognize that children are a gift of God. This card highlights God's hand in the growth of a family (through childbirth or adoption).
Order Code 1-MC

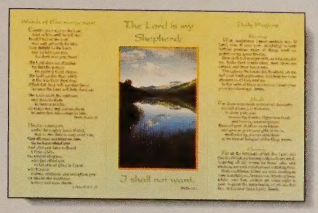


A Card For An Ill Child

Stories of Jesus with the children, lively prayers and children's songs help the recipient of the **Children's Care Card** to realize that God is always present. This card highlights God's power over all illness.
Order Code 1-KC

Hospital Care Cards

Designed with the hospitalized or shut-in person in mind, these beautiful Hospital Care Cards can be mailed, or may be used as a reminder of a visit.

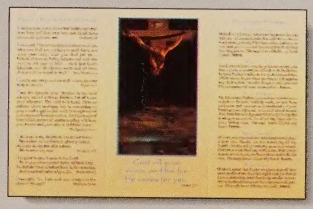


The Lord Is My Shepherd

This card features daily prayers accompanied by quotes from I Peter and Psalm 37. A lengthy quotation from Psalm 139 highlights God's constant, guiding presence.
Order Code 1-HC

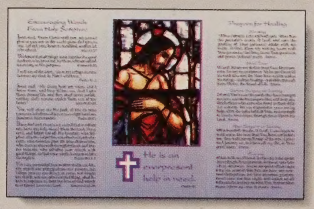
Trust In The Lord

Trust in God's love and power! Verses from the old hymn *I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus*, Bible verses, and a message entitled, "How Are You?" emphasize the fact that God cares and acts.
Order Code 2-HC



He Cares For You

I Peter 5:7, "Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you." is highlighted, with other Bible verses. There are also daily prayers, and a message entitled "You Are Never Alone!" This card replaces HC-C and HD-C.
Order Code 3-HC



An Ever Present Help

SPANISH AVAILABLE TOO!

This card focuses on God's constant presence and good will. Daily prayers, Scripture, and a poetic paraphrase of Psalm 23 are included. This card replaces HH-C. **Order Code 4-HC**.

A Spanish version is also available. Order Code 1-SP.

CARE CARD COSTS:

Cost: **$22**/50, **$35**/100, **$80**/500, **$140**/1000
Custom sized envelopes are also available for the Care Cards, Order Code **HC-E** Cost: **$6**/50, **$10**/100, **$40**/500, **$70**/1000

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPRINTED PRODUCTS

Orders for imprinted items cannot be taken over the phone—they must be mailed. To order any of the custom imprinted materials please type or print the copy you wish imprinted in the space provided to the right. Note that **Care Cards** allow for four lines at the bottom and three lines at the top. The **Pew Cards**, **Certificates**, **Communion Cards** and **Parish Occasion Cards** allow for three lines of imprinting, and the **Memorial Cards** allow for two lines. If you wish your denominational or church logo to appear on the **Care Cards** in place of the standard illustration (a cross) please send along a sample copy (line art only). When imprinted material is ordered with other products from Creative Communications, the other products will be shipped immediately and the imprinted items will be shipped separately. Please allow four weeks for delivery of the personalized cards.

Please use this space to provide typed or printed information for personalized products (use the bottom lines to supply information for the Memorial Card, Certificates, and Pew Cards).

Top: (Care Cards Only) _____
_____
_____

Bottom: _____
_____
_____

❒ Please check this box if including your own logo.

To Order Call 1-800-325-9414. Or Mail In This Order Form.

Bill & Ship To: _____

Attention: _____

Address: _____
(street address preferred)

City: _____ **State/Province:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Please give the name and phone number of the person making this order:

_____
(please print)

(AC) _____ / _____

Quantity	Code	Description	Price	Amount
☐ Yes! Please send me ____ copies of the video ***Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection*** (Order code **S-8L**) for the special discount price of only **$5.95** each. (See the description below for information.)				
☐ Yes! Please send me the **FREE** 16 page VBS catalog (Order Code **VB-C**) and special discount coupon. (See page 23 for details on this very special offer.)				

General Ordering Information

Mail this order form to **Creative Communications for the Parish**, 10300 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63127. Or, call toll-free 1-800-325-9414 each weekday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (central time). Or, **Fax this order form**—1-314-821-9031. All U.S. orders are shipped promptly via UPS with an invoice enclosed in the package. Actual shipping and handling charges are extra and are added to the enclosed invoice. If you have any questions concerning your order please call toll-free at 1-800-325-9414. Orders for imprinted material cannot be taken over the phone. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

All prices in this catalog are in U.S. dollars. Canadian customers may pay in either U.S. or Canadian funds.

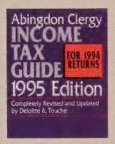
Special Resources for the Church Office—And Great Gift Ideas!

Echoes of Grace: Meditations by Andrew Weyermann

Great Easter Gift!

A 176 page collection of devotions by Andrew Weyermann, *Echoes of Grace* draws together the best of his shorter writings and includes powerful and inspiring messages for Christians in all seasons of life. Paperback, Order Code **WD-B**, Cost, **$7.95**, 3+ **$5.95**

Abingdon Clergy Income Tax Guide



An all-in-one guide for clergy! Prepared and updated by one of the largest tax firms in the world, Deloitte Touche. For 1994 U.S. federal tax returns. Concise explanations of parsonage exclusion provisions and the form for self-employed clergy. Step-by-step instructions. Order Code **AT-X**. Cost: **$9.95**

Post-It® Notes

These **Post-It® Notes** come in pads of 50 sheets, each measuring 2 3/4" x 3". Order Code **SS-P** (Pastor's Office) or **SS-C** (Church office). Cost: **$.60** each for 1-9, **$.50** each for 10+

Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection

Special discount bonus—build your parish video library! Was $11.95, now only $5.95! Big Savings! From the "Children's Heroes of the Bible" series—based on Scripture—an animated rendition of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection. Inspiring and educational. (23 min., VHS) Order Code **S-8L**, Cost: **$5.95** .... For only $4.05 more receive **Jesus' Birth**—both for only **$10**. Order Code **S-9L**.

Large Post-It® Notes

Great for the office, or as gifts! 400 sheets, each with the Christian symbol. Each note is 2 3/4" x 2 3/4". Code **PS-D**, Cost: **$5.95** each/1-5, **$4.95** each/6+

Forget-Me-Nots

These festive 2.5" x 4" cards have an inspirational verse in calligraphy. Send with letters. Use them as bookmarks. Leave them to show love. 8 designs in a gift pack of 150. Order Code **FO-M**. Cost: **$4.95**

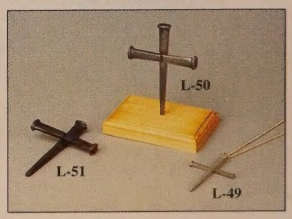
Music for Easter

Bring the joyous music of Easter into your home, car or church through these crystal-clear digital recordings. These compact discs and audio cassettes offer beautifully performed selections of the Easter music.

Handel: The Messiah is performed by the Royal Philharmonic and Royal Choral Society. This 2 CD or cassette set has been captured in Digital Surround Sound. CD Order Code **CD-7**, Cost **$11.99**; Cassette Order Code **CS-7**, Cost **$7.99**

I Know that My Redeemer Lives is entirely instrumental and contains 10 selections including *Jesus Christ is Risen Today, O Sacred Head Now Wounded, I Know that My Redeemer Lives* and *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. CD Order Code **EH-D**, Cost **$9.98**; Cassette Order Code **EH-C**, Cost **$5.98**

Square Nail Crosses



These crosses fashioned out of square nails serve as a unique reminder of the Christian faith.

This attractive square nail cross (3"x2") comes with a 24" steel **neck chain**. With its pewter-like finish it is ideal as a gift or award, or for acolytes or choir members. Order Code **L-49**, Cost: **$3.25**/1-3, **$2.95**/4+

The large square nail **cross in wood** stands 4 1/2" high. Its finished wood base is 3" by 4 1/2". This cross makes a wonderful desk ornament for pastors, in classrooms or the church office. Makes a fine gift. Order Code **L-50**, Cost: **$5.95**/1-3, **$5.50**/4+

The large square nail **wall cross** is 4 1/2" high with a hanging bracket. Appropriate for office, classroom or home. Order Code **L-51**, Cost: **$5.95**/1-3, **$5.50**/4+

Scriptures for the Church Seasons 1995

Jesus: The One Who Saves

LENT • EASTER

Scriptures for the Church Seasons

A Study Book

JESUS: THE ONE WHO SAVES

Copyright © 1994 by Cokesbury. All rights reserved.

Cokesbury

An official resource for The United Methodist Church prepared by the General Board of Discipleship through the Division of Church School Publications and published semi-annually by Cokesbury, 201 Eighth Avenue, South, P. O. Box 801, Nashville, Tennessee 37202. Printed in the United States of America.

Scripture quotations in this publication, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

All readings taken from the Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts are used by permission.

Editorial Team
Eleanor A. Moore, Editor
Tonya M. Williams, Assistant Editor
Kathryn Czynszak, Secretary

Design Team
Susan J. Scruggs, Design Director
Vicki Williamson, Cover Designer
Bill Woods, Layout Designer

Administrative Staff
Neil M. Alexander, Vice-President, Publishing
Duane A. Ewers, Editor of Church School Publications
Gary Ball-Kilbourne, Executive Editor of Adult Publications

For permission to reproduce any material in this publication, call 615-749-6421, or write to Cokesbury, Syndication–Permissions Office, 201 Eighth Avenue, South, P. O. Box 801, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

To order copies of this publication, call toll free: 1-800-672-1789. Call Monday-Friday, 7:30-5:00 Central Time or 8:30-4:30 Pacific Time. Use your Cokesbury account, American Express, Visa, Discover, or MasterCard.

94 95 96 97 98 99 00 01 02 03 — 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

The Scriptures for the Church Seasons Series 2

Introduction 4

The Triumph of Trust 5
(Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13)

The Destiny of God's People 13
(Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Philippians 3:17–4:1; Luke 13:31-35)

The Invitation to New Life 21
(Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9)

The Joy of Reconciliation 28
(Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32)

The Promise of God's Future 36
(Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8)

The Exaltation in Humility 43
(Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 23:1-49)

The Victory of Resurrection 51
(Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12)

Suggestions for Leaders 59

Meet Our Writer ..... inside back cover

THE SCRIPTURES FOR THE CHURCH SEASONS SERIES

Seeks to help Christian adults:

- understand,
- appreciate, and
- participate in

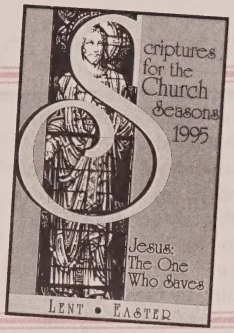
meaningful and joyous celebrations of the Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter seasons.

Provides:

- a five-session study for Advent-Christmas
- a seven-session study for Lent-Easter

Is based on the Revised Common Lectionary:

- Carefully selected passages from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles
- Found in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*
- Three-year cycle



Is designed for:

- Short-term Bible study groups
- Sunday school classes
- Weekday Bible study groups
- Women's groups
- Men's groups
- Home Bible study groups
- Family Bible study
- Intergenerational groups
- Interdenominational groups

Includes Suggestions for Leaders:

- Found on pages 59-72
- Designed for group discussion
- Test participants' understanding of writers' views
- Help develop participants' views
- Enable participants to share their views and life perspectives with other group members

Introduction

I have always been struck by the fact that Sundays are not counted among the forty days of Lent. Sundays are "in" Lent but not "of" this profound period of preparation for Easter. From the time of the early church onward, Jesus' raising by God was celebrated on Sunday. Sunday, the "first day of the week," was, and remains, a celebration of the Resurrection.

On a long and arduous hike through the Adirondak Mountains of New York, I came to appreciate the "rest huts" along the way. There, I could stop, relieve myself of a heavy backpack, and enjoy a few minutes of refreshment before resuming the climb. The Sundays in Lent are like those "rest huts." As we walk the road to the cross, a road of suffering and death, we need to pause for rest and renewal along the way.

Yes, we walk to the cross with Jesus during Lent. Yes, we acknowledge the serious Lenten themes of self-examination, self-denial, and penitence. We may even observe Lent with fasts, intense prayer, or by denying ourselves a particular pleasure during the six weeks before Easter. But we travel through Lent with a clear destination in sight—Easter.

Lent is the reliving of the drama of the cross with the central character being Jesus, the One who saves. Jesus, whose name means "God saves," walks the road to the cross for our salvation. The agonies of the cross—the betrayal, denial, and abandonment of Jesus by his disciples—become redemptive in the hands of a loving God. Jesus suffers and dies on a cross but does so for us and for our salvation. When God raises Jesus, bringing new life out of death, the possibility of abundant life is created.

The cross on which Jesus died is the pivotal symbol of salvation for Christians. Suffering, agony, and death are represented by the cross. But, for us, the cross remains empty as a reminder that Jesus was raised on Easter. In the cross we discover both suffering and victory, sorrow and joy, death and resurrection.

Faith is a journey more than it is a destination. As we make the Lenten journey to the cross, we will discover Jesus, who travels before us and with us. And when we arrive at Easter, we will also find Jesus, raised for us and our salvation—the One who saves.

The Triumph of Trust

1

How should we express our trust in God? This question is at the heart of the lectionary passages for the first Sunday in Lent. Remembering God's faithfulness during the past and responding with an appropriate offering of thanksgiving is one way to express trust in God (Deuteronomy 26:1-11). The psalmist reminds us that God is our refuge and fortress, one whom we can completely rely on (Psalm 91). Another way to demonstrate confidence in God is to confess one's faith. Paul proclaims that salvation is freely available to all who believe (trust) in God through Christ (Romans 10:8b-13). Finally, Jesus models the triumph of trust when he is tested by the Tempter (Luke 4:1-13).

Remembering Whose We Are

For a moment, picture Moses speaking before the gathered assembly of Israelites. They are on the verge of crossing the river Jordan and entering the Promised Land after a forty-year exile in the wilderness. Moses, who can only

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11.

Scriptures for Lent:

First Sunday

Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13

look across the Jordan, will die before the Israelites cross the river. Moses cannot enter Canaan, the Promised Land, because he did not trust in God's power to bring water from a rock at Meribah (Numbers 20:12). Joshua will be the one to lead God's people into the land promised to Abraham and his descendants.

The Book of Deuteronomy presents itself as the farewell address of Moses to the Israelites. Rather than being a single speech, however, Deuteronomy probably includes a collection of sermons, speeches, laws, history, and poetry attributed to Moses. This rich book tells the history of how God redeemed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and led them to a new land of freedom and promise.

Chapter 26, which contains our Scripture passage, is part of Moses' final instructions to the Israelites. This speech, one of many given by Moses throughout the Exodus, looks toward the future when the Hebrews will inhabit Canaan. "When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you," the chapter begins.

The gift of the land was central to the Israelites' self-understanding. They were a people of the land. This land was promised in God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1). Moses led the Hebrews for forty years through the wilderness to this land described as "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). Without this Promised Land, the Hebrews were a people without a home.

Even though the land was a priceless gift, the author of this passage knew how easy it would be to forget the Giver. You and I know how quickly the initial gratitude for a gift fades. Thank-you notes become increasingly difficult to write the more time that passes after receiving a gift. When generations had come and gone, the Israelites might forget Who gave them the land.

So the Israelites were commanded to make an offering of first fruits from the land (Deuteronomy 26:2). They were to take a basket filled with the produce of the land and give it to the priest (verse 3). Every harvest would be a time of remembrance and thanksgiving.

When this offering of first fruits was placed on the altar, a response was to be given, similar to that used when we receive Holy Communion. This response is a confession of Whose they are (verses 5-10a).

The confession found in verses 5-10a is a recounting of Israel's history from Abraham ("a wandering Aramean") to slavery in Egypt to God's deliverance. At the heart of this powerful confession is gratitude to the Lord "who brought us into this place and gave us this land" (verse 9).

After recounting God's providence, the speaker was to set

down the offering, worship God (verse 10b), and celebrate the Lord's bounty (verse 11). Thus, confession was sandwiched between two actions: offering and worship.

Our worship contains the same elements. We enter the sanctuary with praise for God's goodness and love. Then we confess who we are before God and receive God's forgiveness. After hearing God's word proclaimed, we offer our gifts at the altar. Finally, we celebrate God's bounty as we sing the Doxology and are sent into the world to do God's work.

Like the worship described in Deuteronomy 26:1-11, our worship also reminds us of Whose we are. We are God's people who have been redeemed by God's love in Jesus Christ. God is worthy of our trust and deserving of every gift we might offer—even the gift of ourselves.

Our Refuge and Fortress

Read Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16.

The idea of a shelter in a storm became real to me one morning last spring while rowing on the Norwalk River. I was in a boat with three other rowers when a thunderstorm suddenly blew over us. The water grew turbulent, and rain started pouring from black clouds. Lightning, followed by thunderclaps, lighted up the dark sky. Terrified, we rowed furiously until we came to a nearby bridge, which we waited under until the storm subsided. The bridge protected us from the stinging rain and dangerous lightning. We were safe.

The psalmist also knew of God's protection and expressed this assurance eloquently in Psalm 91. He reminded Israel that they lived in the "shelter" and "shadow" of the almighty God, a reference to the Temple (verse 1). He called on the people to give thanks for God's deliverance by proclaiming, "My refuge and my fortress; / my God, in whom I trust" (verse 2).

The God of Psalm 91 is a God in whom we can trust. Image after image of God's loving faithfulness is woven into the poetry of this psalm. God provides shelter and refuge from enemies (verses 9-10); sends angels to make sure no harm befalls us (verses 11-12); and turns away threats to human life, such as lions and snakes, symbols of power and evil (verse 13).

Marvelous words of promise conclude Psalm 91. The psalmist portrays God as a deliverer, protector, and rescuer (verses 14-16). Whenever the faithful call on God's name, God will answer them (verse 15). The final promise of this comforting psalm is that of salvation (verse 16).

In times of difficulty and doubt, when we question God's love or providence, Psalm 91 would be the right psalm to read. Here, we

meet God who is faithful and loving. Here, we encounter God who knows our needs and is responsive. Here, we discover we can rely on and depend on God.

At a funeral for which I officiated last year, the widow requested that I read Psalm 91. This was her husband's favorite psalm. In times of tragedy and grief, we need to hear that God is near. We need to be reminded that God hears us, will be with us in trouble, and will ultimately save us. The psalmist believed in God's protection, and so can we.

To say that God protects does not mean we are immune from the sufferings and tragedies that are part of being human. Trusting in God is not a good luck charm against difficulties. We will still suffer failures, disappointments, illnesses, and problems. Even our Savior suffered all of what we suffer, and more. What we can know, and believe, during times of trouble is that God is with us. The basis for our trust in God is God's faithfulness.

As we shall see, Psalm 91:11-12 is quoted in the story of Jesus' temptation (Luke 4:10-11). Even though these assuring words were spoken by the Tempter in an effort to lure Jesus into putting God to the test, their truth remains. Not even the Tempter can defeat the God of trust portrayed in this psalm. Finally, God's love triumphs over every attempt to defeat it.

Believing and Confessing

Read Romans 10:8b-13.

One of Paul's most difficult struggles was over the place of Israel in God's plan of salvation. Paul, a Jew by birth and a scholar of the Torah, could not believe that God had deserted Israel. After all, the Jews were God's chosen people, elected by God's grace and love. They were also the recipients of the Torah (law), which told them how they were to live. The Jews enjoyed every advantage of being God's chosen people. But, Paul had to face the tragic fact that most of his fellow Israelites had rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

In Romans 9–11, Paul works out his understanding of God's strategy for the redemption of everyone, Jew and Gentile. He shows the fallacy of his own people's reliance on the law for salvation, as well as the tragedy of their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. Christ is portrayed as the end (goal) of the law and the One through whom salvation has been brought to everyone. Paul argues that righteousness, a right relationship with God, does not come through obeying certain rules but comes through faith in God through Jesus Christ. He writes in Romans 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

Paul believed that Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Christ was only temporary. In fact, as part of the divine plan, Israel's rejection of salvation through faith in Christ gave the Gentiles an opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. Paul held on to the hope that, ultimately, everyone will believe in Christ and be saved. He summarized this conclusion in Romans 10:13: "For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "

During a study of the Book of Romans, the question was raised, "Why doesn't everyone believe in salvation through Christ?" This difficult question frustrates simple answers. Many different reasons were suggested: ignorance about the gospel story, refusal to believe, suffering a negative experience in a church, or the hypocrisy of those who claim to believe in Christ. After a long discussion, we agreed that while salvation is offered to everyone, there will always be those who do not accept (believe in) salvation through Jesus Christ.

Paul expressed his belief that salvation is for everyone in Romans 10:8b-13. He began by quoting Deuteronomy 30:14: "The word is near you, / on your lips and in your heart." Here, *word* means the "word of faith" in Jesus Christ that Paul proclaimed. Verse 9 describes the appropriate response to receiving this word of faith: confession and belief. Paul amplifies this idea in verse 10 by writing that belief is a matter of the heart and confession a matter of the mouth. Both belief and confession (heart and mouth) are necessary to the fullness of faith.

Faith is so much more than pious phrases. To confess the words of faith, as we often do in reciting the Apostles' Creed during worship, is not enough. Faith is also a matter of the heart, not only what we believe but how sincerely we believe it.

Faith is also more than deeply felt beliefs. If our beliefs, no matter how fervently held, are not expressed in words and actions, they are ineffective. The author of the Book of James reminds us that faith without the works and words of faith is without life (2:17).

When it comes to faith in the God revealed in Jesus Christ, all distinctions disappear said Paul. Whether you are a Jew or Greek does not matter (Romans 10:12). Neither does it matter if you are male or female, slave or free (Galatians 3:28). God is Lord of all people, and everyone who turns to God in faith will be saved (Romans 10:12-13).

We could add to Paul's list of distinctions: "child or adult." Our United Methodist tradition embodies Paul's no-distinction salvation in the practice of infant baptism. In the sacrament of baptism we acknowledge that everyone, including those who cannot yet speak for themselves, is included in God's love. Through baptism, a child is initiated into a

community of faith. Those of us who witness a child's baptism pledge to surround the child with a community of faith, hope, and love. Through the sacrament of baptism we make no distinctions in who can be a recipient of God's saving love.

Paul's vision of a salvation offered to all is immense and majestic. However, salvation still begins very simply—with heartfelt belief and sincerely-spoken confession. On these two pillars, our salvation rests. Belief and confession express our trust in God.

A Test of Trust

The Greek word for temptation used by Luke also means "trial" or "test." Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was both a trial of his faithfulness to God and a test of his trust in God.

Read Luke 4:1-13.

After his baptism (Luke 3:21-22), Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (4:1). Note that the Spirit led Jesus in the wilderness. Rather than protecting Jesus from the upcoming test, the Spirit took Jesus into battle with the Tempter. There, the Spirit's role was to strengthen Jesus' trust in God.

The forty days in which Jesus fasted call to mind the forty years of the Exodus, the forty days of the Flood, and Moses' forty-day fast (Deuteronomy 9:9), as well as Elijah's fast (1 Kings 19:8). Our forty-day season of Lent is based on the length of time Jesus spent in the wilderness.

Are the forty days of Lent also a time of testing for us? In many ways, our faith is "on trial" during Lent. We have a heightened awareness of the demands of self-examination, self-denial, and self-giving. We are painfully aware of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, where he suffered and died. The Lenten Scriptures remind us that we, too, are called to travel the road to the cross with Jesus. We face tests of faith along the way.

Luke tells of Jesus facing three tests. These three temptations seem to represent categories of tests that all humans face: using power for self-satisfaction, giving allegiance to evil rather than God, and putting God's love to the test. The writer of Hebrews observes: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

The first test Jesus faced was to satisfy his hunger (Luke 4:3). After the forty-day fast, Jesus was "famished" (verse 2). What could be wrong with Jesus feeding himself? It seems reasonable that he should satisfy his hunger; and, eventually, he did. The test was whether Jesus would perform a miracle to feed himself at the command of the Tempter. Jesus turned away the temptation by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3.

For the second test, Jesus was led to a high place and offered authority over "all the kingdoms of the world" (Luke 4:5-6). The test was whether Jesus would rule the world as a vassal of the Tempter. Jesus refused to worship the Devil and quoted Deuteronomy 6:13.

Then the Tempter transported Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple for the final test. There the Tempter challenged Jesus to throw himself down to demonstrate his trust in God (Luke 4:9). This time the Tempter quoted from Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12). Throwing himself into God's hands was exactly what Jesus did on the cross. But here, Jesus refuses to put God's providence to the test at the request of the Tempter, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16.

The crux of these three tests is whether Jesus would trust in God or trust in the Tempter. Jesus eventually performed each of the actions commanded by the Tempter. Not only did he feed himself, he fed five thousand others at Bethsaida (Luke 9:10-17). Ultimately, because of his death and resurrection, Jesus became the ruler of the kingdoms of the world. And on the cross, Jesus gave himself into God's hands, saying, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (23:46).

The cleverness of these tests was in their subtlety. Since Jesus eventually fulfilled all three of the requested actions, what the Tempter asked of Jesus was not unreasonable. But if Jesus had obeyed the Tempter rather than God, he would have failed in his mission of salvation. Jesus must be obedient to God if he was to fulfill his vocation as Messiah.

Having been defeated by Jesus, the Tempter left "until an opportune time" (4:13). That time came when Judas became Jesus' betrayer. Luke wrote: "Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve" (22:3). Judas, by betraying Jesus, set into motion the events that led to Jesus' crucifixion. On the Mount of Olives on the last night of his life, Jesus faced the final test of his obedience to God: acceptance of the cross. There, as in the wilderness, Jesus committed himself to doing God's will (22:42).

What the Tempter offered Jesus was a shortcut. He gave Jesus a way to fulfill his mission without enduring the agonies of the cross. If Jesus would obey the Tempter, there would be no betrayal by Judas, denial by Peter, or desertion by his other disciples. If Jesus would take this alluring shortcut, he would not have to endure the humiliation of the trial and the agonies of the cross. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus was offered the crown without the cross, glory without agony, success without suffering.

Jesus passed the test of his trust in God and began his ministry

"filled with the power of the Spirit" (4:14). In refusing to take the alluring shortcut, he fulfilled his mission of self-giving love. Jesus' trust in God is both an inspiration and an encouragement to us. As we encounter the tests of faith that inevitably come to us in various forms, we can remember the One who was tempted before us. Through the Spirit that dwells within us, we can draw strength and courage to be obedient to God in all times and circumstances.

We have seen how trust is kindled by remembering Whose we are. Through the psalmist we have received the reassurance that God is with us in times of trouble. Paul has shown us the importance of heartfelt belief and sincere confession of our faith in God through Jesus Christ. Jesus, by defeating the Tempter, has pioneered for us the way of trust in and obedience to God. We are now called to believe and participate in the triumph of trust, following the way of Jesus, the One who saves.

As we begin our own Lenten journey, may we place our complete trust in the God of faithfulness and love we have encountered in this first set of Lenten Scriptures. For the way of trust in God is the way of triumph.

The Destiny of God's People 2

While my family and I traveled by car on a summer vacation several years ago, one of my sons, age four, asked, "Daddy, where are we going?" I named our destination and carefully explained that it was still a few hundred miles away.

He pondered my answer for a few moments and then asked, "Are we there yet?"

The root word of destination is destiny. To speak of one's destiny is to speak of the present and the future. Where are we going? How are we going to get there? When will we arrive? These questions are appropriate to considering our destiny.

The Scriptures for this second Sunday in Lent speak in different ways to the destiny of God's people. God's covenant with Abram (Abraham) is confirmed by renewing the promises of a multitude of descendants and a land for them to inhabit (Genesis 15:1-12,17-18). In Philippians 3:17–4:1, Paul speaks of the ultimate destiny of the faithful Christian, as well as the unfaithful person. Finally, in Jesus' lament over the people of Jerusalem, we discover that he will share in the tragic destiny of the prophets who came before him (Luke 13:31-35).

Scriptures for Lent:

Second Sunday

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Philippians 3:17–4:1
Luke 13:31-35

The Destiny of a Nation

When I was a young boy, my father promised me that if I practiced every day, I would become a good basketball player. I wanted to believe his promise, but there was a problem. We did not have a basketball goal in our driveway. I could practice at neighbors' houses, but it was not the same as having my own place to play. The Christmas after this promise was made to me, I received the means for its fulfillment. A large package was leaning against the wall near the tree on Christmas morning. As I excitedly tore off the wrapping paper, I saw that the box contained a backboard, basketball goal, and net.

Read Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18.

Abram also found himself in the position of receiving a promise but not having the means for its fulfillment. God had called Abram and Sarai, his wife, to leave their home country of Haran and to travel many miles west to a land called Canaan. Their call had included a wonderful promise: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1-2). We have come to call this special promise God's covenant with Abraham.

This promise posed a major problem, however. Abram and Sarai had no children. To complicate the promise further, they were growing old, far beyond childbearing age. How could God's promise of becoming a great nation be fulfilled if Abram and Sarai's line died with them? To become a great nation, Abram and Sarai needed descendants.

If you were Abram, would you have doubted God's promise? I know doubts would have crept into my mind. A promise that seems impossible to fulfill is difficult to believe. Everything seemed to be stacked against the fulfillment of the promise. Abram and Sarai were too old, and Sarai had been barren throughout her life. But, as happens so many times in the Scriptures, Abram's doubts led to God's reassurance.

God spoke to Abram in a vision, reassuring him that God would protect him ("I am your shield") and declaring that Abram's "reward shall be very great" (Genesis 15:1). Abram expressed his doubt, telling God that his lone heir was Eliezer of Damascus, the child of a slave (verses 2-3). God then reassured Abram again, telling him that Eliezer would not be his heir but that Abram and Sarai would have a child (verse 4).

God did not offer Abram an argument or proof to counter his doubts. Rather, God told Abram to look at the countless stars in

the heavens—"so shall your descendants be" (verse 5). Earlier, God had promised Abram that his offspring would be as countless as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16).

Can you remember a time when you were able to see the brilliance of the sky on a clear night? Maybe you were on a camping trip or away from the glow of city lights. In August, 1993, on a beach on the coast of Georgia, I viewed with awe the Perseid meteor shower, a rare event with hundreds of shooting stars on a single night. The sight of the countless stars above was breathtaking. I felt a sense of the majesty and magnificence of God's creation. Even more, I began to grasp the overwhelming power of the One who created the universe.

We are not told how Abram felt when he looked into the night sky, but we are told of his reaction: "He believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness" (15:6). Because of the words of the Lord and the sign of the stars, Abram moved from doubt to faith. (Notice how this same pattern of promise/doubt/divine assurance/faith is repeated in verses 7-21.) The destiny of God's people had been confirmed.

But there was another problem with the promise. When God reaffirmed that Abram's descendants would inhabit the land of Canaan, Abram asked, "How am I to know that I shall possess it?" (verses 7-8). Then God took an oath that the promise to Abram would be fulfilled. The ritual of oath taking is described in verses 9-11, 17. Parties in a covenant used such a ritual in ancient times to swear their intention to fulfill their mutual agreement. Here God takes the oath while Abram watches in terror and awe.

After dark, a "smoking fire pot" and "flaming torch" passed between the parts of the animals laid on the ground (verse 17). This action was part of the oath-taking ritual. The promise (covenant) between God and Abram was then reaffirmed (Genesis 15:18).

The destiny of God's people had now been twice confirmed: first by the sign of countless stars and second by God performing the oath-taking ritual. Abram could have confidence in the promises of many descendants and a land for them to inhabit. The future of God's people was guaranteed by God's self-commitment.

At times each of us doubts our destiny as God's people. In times of tragedy we may doubt God's providence. In times of suffering we may question whether God is with us. In times of disappointment we may wonder whether the future holds any hope for us. In these times we can learn from the story of Abram, whose doubts led him to faith.

The Destiny of the Faithful Christian

One of the books John Wesley cited as having a great influence on his faith was Thomas `a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ.* This spiritual classic, first published in 1426, has been revered over the centuries for its simple, yet profound, devotion to Christ. In this book `a Kempis recorded his reflections on what it means to live a Christlike life.

Read Philippians 3:17–4:1.

When Paul told his readers to "join in imitating me" (Philippians 3:17), he was really calling them to lead the same Christlike life to which `a Kempis was pointing. Earlier Paul had proclaimed, "I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8) and "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death" (verse 10). Paul was inviting his readers, and us, to participate in living a faithful Christian life.

The reason Paul so forcefully admonished the Philippian Christians to join him in leading a Christlike life was that some members of the church at Philippi were leading another kind of life. "With tears," Paul told them, "many live as enemies of the cross of Christ" (verse 18). Paul spoke of these persons with deep sadness because they were fellow Christians. The characteristics of these "enemies" arose out of their focus on worldly concerns. Their goal was destruction; they allowed their appetites to become their god; they were consumed with "earthly things" (verse 19). The destiny of these persons was destruction.

The persons Paul had in mind were probably the same as those mentioned in Philippians 3:2-4, the "evil workers" who "mutilate the flesh" (practice circumcision). These were Jewish Christians who had adopted the gnostic belief that the body was evil and only the soul was good. Ironically, this belief resulted in physical excesses for the purpose of demonstrating the irrelevance of the body. Rather than being focused on the spiritual life, these Christians were absorbed with "earthly things." Paul believed that the consequence of these gnostic beliefs was self-destruction.

How different the view of these gnostic Christians was from the New Testament understanding of the whole person being saved by God's grace in Jesus Christ. The body itself is not evil. What is evil is the wrong uses to which we put our bodies. Much of Jesus' ministry was concerned with compassionate acts of healing of those with infirm bodies. To claim that the body is simply an evil dwelling for a good soul

is foreign to an understanding of persons made whole by the gift of salvation.

Whenever we demean or devalue the human body, we fall into the trap of those Paul was writing about. Our bodies are created by God and are to be used for God's purposes. When God created humankind, as male and female, God declared them "very good" (Genesis 1:26-31). The human body is to be celebrated and accepted as a gift from God.

In contrast with the destiny of these "enemies of the cross of Christ," Paul describes the glorious destiny of faithful Christians in Philippians 3:20-21. The focus of the faithful is not on the worldly but on the heavenly. "Our citizenship is in heaven," Paul wrote. In other words, the Christian's allegiance is not to this world but to the realm of God's love and grace. Rather than setting our minds on "earthly things," we are called to set our minds on what is holy and godly. Paul expanded this thought a few verses later when he wrote: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8).

With all the concerns that press themselves on us each day, Paul's advice is difficult to follow. We have bills to pay, clothes to wash, meals to cook, jobs to work, appointments to keep, and deadlines to meet. We can become so engrossed in the details of everyday living that we may forget about the "heavenly things" Paul was speaking of. But, as last Sunday's Gospel lesson reminded us, "One does not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4b).

A weekly reminder of our heavenly destiny is Sunday worship. During that hour, we are called to remember what is truly significant about life through the hymns, prayers, Scripture readings, sermon, and responses. In worship we are transported into that realm of faith, hope, and love to which God has called us in Jesus Christ.

Paul described our future as Christians in Philippians 3:21—the transformation of our bodies. By *body* Paul did not mean the physical body. For Paul, body was *soma*, a Greek word meaning "whole person." In this view we do not have bodies; we are bodies. Our "body of humiliation," which endures many sufferings because of our loyalty to Christ, will ultimately be transformed into a body of glory. This transformation is made possible by the "power of his [Christ's] resurrection" (3:10). Christians live in faith and expectation of not only their personal transformation but also the transformation of all creation (verse 21).

The concluding admonition of this text is a fitting one. With deep love and affection for the congregation at Philippi, Paul pleads with his "brothers and sisters" in the faith to "stand firm in the Lord in this way" (4:1). To stand firm "in this way" means to be faithful to Christ, to imitate Paul in living a Christlike life, and to live the Christian way of life.

When we become too absorbed with the cares and concerns of daily living, we need to hear the words "stand firm." When our faith has been rocked by a major disappointment or painful failure, we need to "stand firm." When we are tempted to forget that our true destiny is with God, we need to be told to "stand firm." "Standing firm" is the way we keep the faith in the present and anticipate God's future with hope and joy.

Paul's words remind us that our destiny as Christians is a glorious one. Even now, God is working in us and through us to transform our life into what it can become by God's grace.

The Destiny of the Messiah

As I write these words people are being killed in the Holy Land. Less than one month ago, an extremist entered a mosque where hundreds of people were praying and sprayed the congregation with bullets, killing over thirty worshipers. Armed soldiers patrol the streets of Hebron and other cities, including Jerusalem, in fear of another Palestinian uprising or a terrorist attack. A thick tension hovers over Jerusalem like the morning fog.

Read Luke 13:31-35.

Conflict and controversy are not new to Jerusalem. Jesus' lament in our Gospel passage points to Jerusalem's past: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it" (Luke 13:34). Jerusalem had rejected prophets in the past and would soon put to death the Messiah. Luke portrays Jesus as heading toward Jerusalem with full awareness of what awaits him there. Jesus knew that entering Jerusalem meant a death sentence.

Strangely, some Pharisees came to warn Jesus to "get away" from Jerusalem (13: 31). Generally the Pharisees were Jesus' opposition, and eventually they sought to have him tried for blasphemy. While we are not told these Pharisees' motives, it may be they were concerned that Jesus' ministry was disrupting the civil calmness Herod wanted in Palestine. Or perhaps they were trying to frighten Jesus into retreating into the countryside and giving up his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing.

Jesus' response was forceful (verse 32). He would not be

scared away by a "fox" like Herod. The fox was noted for slyness and deviousness but not great power. Jesus would fulfill his mission on a time schedule of his own choice. The days mentioned in verse 32b are not a literal three-day period but a way of speaking about completeness. In other words, Jesus would complete his work, which would put him on a crash course with the civil and religious authorities in Jerusalem.

Jesus planned to continue to do his work of preaching and healing, even though it meant going to Jerusalem to face a cross (verse 33). The last portion of verse 33 may have been a well-known proverb in Jesus' time: "It is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem." The tone of this proverb was biting, pointing to the irony that another of God's messengers would die in the Holy City. It bears a striking similarity to another proverb Jesus cited when he was rejected in his hometown of Nazareth: "No prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown" (Luke 4:24).

Prophets are still being killed, even in our century. Recall the assassinations of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Ironically, these two prophets of peace and non-violent resistance were victims of violence. Both knew the risks of speaking publicly. Both were aware that their life could end with an assassin's bullet. Yet, both continued to speak out—Gandhi for the independence of the people of India and King for peace and justice for his people.

Jesus would share in the destiny of the prophets before him (Luke 13:34). Some were "killed" and others "stoned" by the people of Jerusalem. But the city too faced a tragic destiny. Jesus would have loved to offer them the compassionate protection of a mother hen. Rather, the words of judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem are pronounced: "You were not willing" to accept God's Messiah (verse 34). In refusing to accept Jesus, God's Son, those in Jerusalem had rejected God's love. The consequence of Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus is voiced in verse 35: "See, your house is left to you." Perhaps the Revised Standard Version's translation of this verse better captures its tone: "Behold, your house is forsaken."

Remember that by the time Luke's Gospel was written (A.D. 85–100), Jerusalem had been razed and the Temple destroyed by a Roman invasion (A.D. 70). The prophetic words of Jesus were fulfilled.

In the town I live in there is an annual "Procession of the Cross" on Good Friday. A group of Christians of all ages, clergy and laity, gather in the morning and walk up the main street about a mile, taking turns carrying a large, wooden cross. The procession ends at a

church, where an ecumenical Good Friday service is held.

After participating in this procession, one little girl, about nine years old, turned to her father and asked, "Why did Jesus have to die?" Because we had arrived at the church and the service was about to begin, I was not able to hear his answer.

How would you have answered this child's question? I discovered my own answer at the beginning of the Good Friday service during the reading of the Passion story from Luke. Jesus "had" to die to show us the lengths to which God's love will go for us. I also realized that the cross was the very worst humans are capable of. In torturing and killing an innocent man, humanity reached its lowest point. But God took our worst and transformed it into an act of supreme self-giving love.

Luke 13:31-35 ends, not with judgment, but with words of hope. Jesus tells the Pharisees that they will not see him until the time when they will say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (verse 35b). These words from Psalm 118:26 are the same as those proclaimed by the crowds when Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king (Luke 19:38). Of course, we already know the destiny of this king. He will "undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Luke 9:22).

As we continue our Lenten journey, we will discover how our individual destinies are bound up with the destiny of Jesus, the One who saves. The Christian life follows the way of the cross. Yet, as Paul reminds us in Philippians, our destiny as Christians is a glorious one—a Christlike present and a transformed future. And the God who offers us such a marvelous destiny through Jesus Christ is the same God who fulfilled the covenant with Abram and Sarai. This is the God in whom we trust, not only for today but for every tomorrow.

The Invitation to New Life 3

Charles Wesley captured the invitational nature of our faith in Christ in his hymn "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 339):

> Come, sinners, to the gospel feast;
> let every soul be Jesus' guest.
> Ye need not one be left behind,
> for God hath bid all humankind.

Yes, each and every one of us is invited to participate in the "gospel feast" of new life, hope, and joy. We call this feast "salvation." And Jesus, the One who saves, invites all humankind to partake.

The Scripture passages for this Sunday issue the invitation to new life, but in different ways. In Isaiah 55:1-9, we hear the invitation to abundant life issued to the Jews returning home after fifty years in Babylonian exile. The psalmist invites us to join in praising God's steadfast and sustaining love (Psalm 63:1-8). Paul invites us to learn that faithfulness to God is always required (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). And, in Luke 13:1-9, we hear the invitation to repentance.

Scriptures for Lent:

Third Sunday

Isaiah 55:1-9
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

An Invitation to Abundant Life

During a February vacation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, my wife, Donna, and I went to the market one morning. When Americans hear the word *market,* we think of a grocery store as in "supermarket." But a Mexican market is far more than a place to buy groceries. An amazing array of merchandise is sold there—tools, clothes, toys, shoes, and every kind of produce imaginable. A Mexican market is a bountiful feast of goods.

Read Isaiah 55:1-9.

The opening words of Isaiah 55 sound as if they could have been spoken by vendors in just such a market:

> Ho, everyone who thirsts,
> come to the waters;
> and you that have no money,
> come, buy and eat!
> (verse 1a)

But an unusual market is described here. Money is not needed in this market. "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" is the invitation (verse 1b). In these words we discover a marketplace of grace. The language of verse 1 is the language of blessing rather than the language of commerce. These words of blessing were meant for the exiles returning from Babylonia.

Isaiah 55:1-2 proclaims that the fullness of God's blessing is awaiting the exiles when they return home. The invitation to eat and drink is addressed to the hungry and thirsty exiles after their long journey. The command to "listen carefully" and "incline your ear" (verses 2-3b) is a preparation for the promise that follows in verses 3c-5.

What the people are summoned to hear is that God intends to establish an "everlasting covenant" with God's people just like the earlier covenant made with David, Israel's greatest king. David, a "leader and commander" for Israel and surrounding nations, was the recipient of God's promise to "establish his line forever" (Psalm 89:28-29).

Now this marvelous promise will extend beyond Israel, however, to "nations that you do not know" (Isaiah 55:5). This image of nations being drawn to Israel because of God's glorious blessing is reminiscent of Isaiah 2:2, which describes all nations streaming to the "mountain of the LORD's house."

What Isaiah announced was wonderful good news. Not only would God deliver the exiles, God would bless them abundantly. And, not only would God bless them, God would bless all the world through them.

Such tremendous news begs for a response on the part of its recipients. Verses 6-7 describe the appropriate responses—to "seek" and to "return to" the

Lord. The call to "seek the LORD" was also the message of earlier prophets like Amos (5:6) and Jeremiah (29:12). Here the call is urgent and specific. The Lord is to be sought while he can be found and is to be called on while he is near.

The call to "return to the LORD" (verse 7) was also basic to the Old Testament prophets. Echoes of this call to repentance can be found in every prophetic book, major and minor. The invitation to abundant life always demands such a response. The gift must be gratefully received, or it loses its power to give new life. If we will repent, God will "have mercy" and "abundantly pardon," promised Isaiah.

This grace-filled passage concludes with a reminder of the infinite difference between God and human beings. God's "thoughts" and "ways" have boundless horizons, while ours are finite. When speaking about God, we ought to always acknowledge how awe-inspiring is the Creator of all that is (verses 8-9).

As words of Scripture, Isaiah's words are not only addressed to the returning exiles but to us. We are hungry and thirsty for the abundant life offered as God's gift. We also stand in need of seeking and returning to the Lord. And we return to a God whose thoughts and ways are as far above our thoughts and ways as the heavens are above the earth.

An Invitation to Praise

Read Psalm 63:1-8.

In many ways it was simply another potluck church supper. But, in one way, it was not. Yes, the usual scrumptious assortment of home-cooked vegetables, casseroles, and desserts was spread over three long tables. And, yes, everyone was waiting for me, the pastor, to say the grace before attacking the food. But, just as I was about to open my mouth to speak, a child said, "Let's sing!" I had to agree that this feast deserved a song of praise. So we joined in singing the Doxology.

If Isaiah has invited us to the feast of abundant life, the psalmist who wrote Psalm 63 asks us to join in a song of praise for this feast.

The psalm begins with a fulfillment of Isaiah's call to seek the Lord. "O God, you are my God, I seek you," proclaims verse 1. Such seeking is a result of a soul thirsting for God and a body "fainting" for the Lord. The psalmist is famished spiritually.

These words may have been written in the wilderness, as the introduction implies—"A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah." We may not know what being in such a wilderness area is like, but we do know what it is like to "thirst" for God in a spiritual wilderness. Most often, I find myself in a spiritual wilderness because of

neglect. I get so caught up in the business of everyday living that I fail to take time to reflect on God's grace and love. After spending time in this wilderness, I am thirsty and hungry for God's presence.

Where else does the psalmist find spiritual nourishment but "in the sanctuary" (verse 2)? Worship is the means of satisfying our spiritual hunger. While the psalmist encounters God's presence in the Temple, wherever we discover God is a sanctuary of a kind. We need not limit our worship of God to one hour on Sunday morning in a church building. God is not bound to any time or place. To meet God anywhere is to behold God's "power and glory."

The Hebrew word *hesed,* translated as "steadfast love," is used throughout the Old Testament for God's love of humanity. Such love is "better than life" because it is the highest thing in life. The natural response to receiving God's steadfast love is praise (verse 3). The note of praise at the end of verse 3 is taken up in a symphony of praise in verse 4, where the psalmist pledges to bless the Lord all his life.

In verse 5, the image of the "feast" enters the psalm. The God-given feast of abundant life satisfies the hunger of the soul for God. Praise overflows into joy as the psalmist's song continues.

The psalmist's first thoughts in the morning ("on my bed") are of God's love, as are his last thoughts before sleep ("the watches of the night"). Yet another reason for the psalmist's praise is found in verse 7: God's help and protection have been given. Therefore, he will "sing for joy."

The psalmist's soul, which first thirsted for God and was then satisfied by God, now "clings" to God. The result of clinging to God is being upheld by divine strength (verse 8).

Last Easter members of our congregation were invited to come forward during the final hymn to join the choir in singing the "Hallelujah Chorus." Although I did not go forward, I sang with the choir while standing in my pew. As I looked around, I noticed that many others in the congregation had joined in this chorus of praise. Receiving the invitation to praise in Psalm 63, what else can we do but join in praising God with satisfied souls and joyful lips?

An Invitation to Learn

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Is it possible to learn from the mistakes of the past? The late historian Barbara Tuchman struggled with this question in her book *The March of Folly*. In this sweeping journey through history, she looked at three wars—the Trojan, the

American Revolution, and Vietnam. What she discovered was that the same mistakes were repeated by those in power. She concluded, "We can only muddle on as we have done in those same three or four thousand years, through patches of brilliance and decline, great endeavor and shadow" (page 387). According to Tuchman, history is a tragic march of folly.

Paul had a more hopeful estimate of the human capacity to learn from history. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, he invites the Christians at Corinth to learn from Israel's history.

Paul commonly read the Old Testament as pointing to Christ. Here he begins with a Christ-centered interpretation of the Exodus. In verses 1-4, the events of Israel's wandering in the wilderness are interpreted in terms of the Christian sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. The Israelites were "under the cloud" and "passed through the sea," which Paul understood as symbolic of the Spirit's presence and the water of baptism (verse 2). Also, the Israelites ate "spiritual food" (manna) and drank "spiritual drink" (water from the rock at Horeb, Exodus 17:6), as Christians do in receiving Holy Communion (verses 3-4). Paul interpreted Christ as the rock from which the water came when Moses struck it.

What Paul was arguing was that the Israelites received benefits from God of the same kind as Christians receive in baptism and Holy Communion. But these benefits did not protect them from the consequences of evil actions (verse 5). Their sins were punished by their being sentenced to wander in the wilderness until they died (Numbers 14:26-30). Neither are the sacraments substitutes for faithfulness to God.

Religious rituals like baptism and Holy Communion can be deeply meaningful and fulfilling. We may feel a sense of completeness once we have participated in them. Yet these sacraments are means of God's grace and not ends in themselves. Baptism is our initiation into the church, and Holy Communion sustains us in our faith. These are not substitutes for the life of faith but reminders and means of living faithfully. When we make religious rituals into ends rather than means, we may believe that we have fulfilled all that God requires of us. Paul corrected this false impression.

The invitation to learn in this passage comes in the form of a warning: learn from Israel's history, or face the consequences (verse 6). The sins of the Hebrews in the wilderness are listed: idolatry (verse 7), sexual immorality (verse 8), testing God (verse 9), and complaining (verse 10). The results of these sins were various kinds of destruction (Numbers 14, 16, 21, 25).

In 1 Corinthians 10:11-12, Paul applies these lessons of the Exodus to the Christians at

Corinth. They must learn quickly, because the "ends of the ages have come" (verse 11). When he wrote this letter, Paul expected Christ's second coming to occur very soon. The Corinthians are also cautioned about being overconfident in their faith: "Watch out that you do not fall" (verse 12). Pride and arrogance led the Israelites to believe they were immune from the consequences of their sins.

The warnings in the previous verses reach a positive conclusion in verse 13. Paul reassures his readers that: (1) temptation is common to all, (2) God is faithful in strengthening the one tested, and (3) God provides a way to endure tests of faith. God requires obedience but gives strength and power to live faithfully.

Maybe we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the Israelites and the Corinthians. Pride, selfishness, and idolatry are still with us. Even Paul admitted that the tests of faith we meet in daily life are the result of being human. But there is a word of hope to be discovered in the invitation to learn from the past. While temptations to sin still abound, so does God's grace. Just as God strengthened the Israelites and the Christians at Corinth, so also will God strengthen our faith. And this gift of God's grace frees us to turn to God in faith and faithfulness.

A Call to Repentance

Read Luke 13:1-9.

Invitations differ in their purpose and tone. A dinner invitation may be casual or formal, printed or spoken. An invitation to stop in and visit a friend can be serious or superficial. An altar call is a purposeful kind of invitation, while an invitation to come to the church picnic carries less urgency.

When speaking of repentance, as Jesus does in Luke 13:1-9, a type of invitation is implied. However, *invitation* may be too weak a word to convey the urgency and necessity of Jesus' message. Rather, we are *called* to repent. As we will see, our life may depend on how we respond to this pressing call.

In Luke 13:1-4, two tragedies are mentioned. The first is Pilate's killing Galileans while they were offering sacrifices. The tragic nature of their deaths was deepened because they were performing a righteous ritual. The second tragedy is the collapse of a tower in Jerusalem, killing eighteen (verse 4). Jesus asks of both tragedies: Do you think this happened to them because they were worse sinners than others?

Hidden in Jesus' question is an assumption many of us make about tragedy: there must be a reason for it. We may try to make a connection between tragedy and morality. "He must have

brought it on himself," we might say. Or, "She deserves what she got," we assume.

In the story of the man born blind (John 9), the disciples assume that blindness is due to sin. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" they ask (John 9:2). Just as Jesus refused to connect infirmity and sin in that story, he also denies the connection between tragedy and sin in Luke 13. To the questions of whether the people of Galilee and Jerusalem were killed because they were terrible sinners, Jesus answers a resounding, "No."

Yet Jesus goes on to use these tragedies to warn us: "Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did" (Luke 13:3, 5). Jesus was not making the threat that the lack of repentance would lead to tragedy and death. Rather, he was warning us that our failure to repent would lead to spiritual death.

The Greek word for repentance literally means "to turn around." To repent is to turn away from a sinful way of life and to turn toward God in faith. Repentance involves a change of heart, mind, and will. It is the act of orienting our life toward God through Jesus Christ. Understood in this way, not to repent is to remain turned away from God and to live in death. For "death" is self-separation from God.

The urgency of repentance is underlined in the parable of the fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). The owner of the vineyard is frustrated with the tree's lack of fruit. Because he has found the tree barren of fruit for three consecutive years, he wants to chop it down. Three years was more than a reasonable time for a tree to bear fruit. If a tree did not produce fruit within three years, it would never produce. But the gardener intervenes on behalf of the tree, pleading for one more year. He pledges to dig around the tree's roots and to fertilize it. However, one year is a final limit. If the tree does not bear fruit at the next year's harvest, then it will be cut down.

This parable contains a word of grace and a word of warning. It tells us that there is still time to repent; a "grace period" has been given. Yet God's judgment will still come.

Today is the only day we have to live in God's grace. Yesterday is already a distant memory, and tomorrow is not guaranteed. The present moment is the one in which repentance is called for. This moment is the only one we really have. May we not waste it.

We have received four invitations through the Scripture passages for this Sunday: to live abundantly, to praise God, to learn from the past, and to repent. These invitations ask for a response. It is time that we made our R.S.V.P. Will we accept the invitation to new life?

The Joy of Reconciliation

4

If I could choose one word to describe God's activity in our world, it would be *reconciliation*. Paul voiced a similar thought when he wrote, "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Our God is a reconciling God. From creation onward, the story of the Bible tells of God seeking reconciliation with us. The Scripture passages for the fourth Sunday in Lent focus on God's actions of forgiveness and reconciliation and our response to those actions. As the Israelites camp at Gilgal, the Passover they celebrate marks the ending of one era and the beginning of a new era of reconciliation (Joshua 5:9-12). Psalm 32 expresses the joys of forgiveness as well as the pain of not being reconciled to the Lord. In one of the most poignant passages in his letters, Paul describes God's reconciling activity as well as God's commissioning of Christians to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). Finally, in the parable of the two sons, we meet a father who is a model of reconciliation (Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32).

Through these four Scripture passages, we will

Scriptures for Lent:

Fourth Sunday

Joshua 5:9-12
Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

discover the God who is always reconciling the world to God-self.

A New Era Begins

They were both pivotal moments.

Read Joshua 5:9-12.

In Atlanta, Georgia, I stood before an altar facing my bride, Donna, as we exchanged vows and rings. Standing there, I realized that life would never be the same for me again. The era of singleness had ended. I was beginning a new stage of life, the married stage, in which the two of us would deeply share the joys and challenges of daily living.

One week later I stood before another altar, this one in Glorietta, New Mexico, and recited the ordination vows of The United Methodist Church. When I knelt and felt the weight of my bishop's hands on my head, another new era had been inaugurated. I was now an ordained minister. A service of Holy Communion climaxed this high and holy moment.

Joshua 5:9-12 describes a pivotal moment for the Israelites that also included a sacred meal. The forty-year period of wilderness wanderings was ending, and a new era was beginning. Now that the Israelites had entered the Promised Land, they would have to conquer and settle it. On the eve of their conquest, while camping on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated their first Passover in the new land.

Prior to the Passover celebration, Joshua circumcised all the male Israelites born in the wilderness (verses 2-8). Circumcision of this new generation prior to the Passover was required by God's command to Moses in Exodus 12:48.

The place where the Israelites were camping was named Gilgal, which means "to roll." We are told that the reason for this name was that God had "rolled away" from Israel the disgrace of slavery in Egypt (Joshua 5:9). The life of oppression, as well as the forty-year exile in the Sinai wilderness, had ended. There would be a new beginning in the land of Canaan.

Israel taking possession of the land was an act of reconciliation by God. Rather than punishing this new generation of Israelites for the disobedience of their parents during the Exodus, God wiped the slate clean. The new chapter in Israel's history that was beginning not only involved the conquest and settlement of the land but also meant a new relationship with God. The sins of the past had been forgiven. The current generation would be given new opportunities for obedience to God.

The first Passover celebration in the Promised Land cemented this new relationship with God (verse 10). The Exodus, which

began with the first Passover (Exodus 12), now ended with this Passover. While the Passover rehearsed God's past acts of salvation in bringing the Hebrews out of Egypt, the Passover at Gilgal also anticipated the future possession of the land. The Passover, along with circumcision, prepared the Israelites for the coming battles in which they would carve out a place for themselves in the land of Canaan.

Another sign that the Exodus had ended came the day after the Passover, when the Israelites ate the produce of the land (verse 11). Until now, they had been nourished by manna, the bread-like substance that God had provided. Now the manna ended, and the Israelites ate the crops of their new land (verse 12).

This story of transition from the old to the new is also the story of our life. Whenever we recommit ourselves to living by faith in God through Jesus Christ, a new era begins for us. The sins of our past are forgiven; and we are reconciled to the God of love revealed in Jesus, the One who saves.

At Gilgal, Israel experienced the power of God's reconciling love: the disgrace of the past was transformed into dignity, the manna of the wilderness was replaced with the produce of the land, and the homelessness of the wilderness ended with the gift of a new homeland. What God did for Israel, God will also do for us if we will open our life to that power of love. We, too, can receive a new beginning.

The Joy of Forgiveness

Brian Wren's communion hymn "I Come With Joy" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 617) profoundly expresses the joy of God's forgiveness.

Read Psalm 32.

> I come with joy to meet my Lord,
> forgiven, loved and free,
> in awe and wonder to recall
> his life laid down for me,
> his life laid down for me.[1]

Linking joy and forgiveness seems deeply right. Knowing forgiveness lifts a heavy weight from one's spirit. Forgiveness brings freedom from remorse. Forgiveness releases from guilt. Forgiveness is love reaching out to heal the broken spirit of the offender.

The psalmist portrays both the joys of forgiveness and the agonies of not being reconciled to God in Psalm 32. This psalm of individual thanksgiving was probably sung in the Temple when a guilt offering was presented at the altar.

The psalm begins with two beatitudes (blessings) for those who know the Lord's forgiveness (verses 1-2). The happiness expressed in these verses is the result of God's forgiveness. The words *transgressions, sins,* and

iniquities describe a spirit alienated from God. *Forgiveness*, therefore, describes reconciliation with God.

In verses 3-4, the psalmist tells of the experience of alienation from God. When sins were not acknowledged, the psalmist's body "wasted away" and "strength was dried up." The words portray a broken spirit, weakened by guilt and remorse.

Haven't we all known the pain of not admitting our sins? By refusing to confess the truth about ourselves, we live in self-deception and guilt. Guilt may be the most painful of emotions. It stalks us and weighs heavily upon us. Until the burden of guilt is lifted, we indeed "waste away" as the psalmist wrote.

Confession of sin is the way out of our agony, as well as the way to reconciliation with God (verse 5). Once the psalmist admits his sin, he receives God's forgiveness. This same pattern of confession of sin and reception of forgiveness has become an essential part of our worship as Christians. Without confession of sin, we receive no forgiveness. While God's forgiveness remains always available, it stays at a distance until we become receptive by acknowledging our sins.

Verses 6-7 voice a plea for the faithful to offer prayers of confession to God. Verse 6 could be paraphrased: the one who calls on God at the right times will not be flooded by trouble like the waters of a flood. Verse 7 describes God's protection.

When is the "right time" to call on God? In times of distress, when we feel alone or deserted, we pray to God. In moments of disappointment and failure, we turn to God. But the psalmist also calls us to prayer when the burden of guilt becomes too heavy for us to bear. In the context of Psalm 32, the "right time" to pray becomes any time we want to confess, intercede, give thanks, or praise God.

Commentators disagree about whether the speaker in verses 8-9 is God or the psalmist. If the speaker is God, as I believe, the knowledge that God's "eye" is on us is a reassuring thought. In the mouth of the psalmist, these verses sound like a threat that the psalmist is watching us to see whether we are obedient. Verse 9 calls us to pay attention to God's instruction in the way we ought to live.

The final verses of this psalm (10-11) summarize the psalmist's experience. "The wicked" are tormented because they will not admit their evil and, therefore, cannot receive God's forgiveness. They remain alienated from God rather than reconciled. However, for those who trust in God, "steadfast love" surrounds them. The final verse of this psalm calls us to rejoice in God's forgiving love.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

The sign on the lawn of a church two blocks from my home has always impressed me. Under the name of the church are these words: "Ministers: members of the congregation." Underneath that line, the names of the pastors are listed. This sign echoes the understanding of the ministry of all Christians found in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (1992): "all Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free" (Paragraph 105, Pages 109-110).

Paul also believed that all Christians were called to be ministers. He continually challenged the recipients of his letters to join with him in ministry, even to the point of imitating his example. In 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Paul summons all Christians to the ministry of reconciliation.

In the verses preceding this passage, Paul defends his own ministry and claims that it is based on the love of Christ, who died and was raised for us (verses 11-15). The "therefore" in verse 16 connects the thought with verses 14-15. Paul explains the practical effects of being "dead" to oneself and "alive" to Christ. To be alive to Christ means, first, to no longer evaluate ("regard") other persons by worldly standards, such as wisdom or heritage. And, because such worldly standards have no place in evaluating one another, they are also inappropriate for understanding Christ. In other words, Christians are not to evaluate one another, or Christ, by outward or external qualities.

A second result of being alive to Christ is a radical transformation of the Christian's life (verse 17). To be "in Christ" is to be part of a "new creation" in which the old life has passed away and everything has become new. This newness is larger than the individual. The old order (what belonged to worldly existence) has been put to death with Christ. The new order is the reign of God's love established by Christ's raising from the dead.

One of Paul's favorite expressions of the Christian's relationship with God is "in Christ." To be "in Christ" is to live in the Spirit of Christ (what Paul calls "life in the Spirit" in Romans 8:1-17). By God's grace and our response of faith, we can live "in Christ."

Second Corinthians 5:18-19 outlines the basis of the ministry of reconciliation. First, God's reconciling of the world is an act of God's initiative—a free gift. Second, Christ is the agent of God's reconciling of the world. The cross is the supreme act of reconciliation. Third, reconciliation

means forgiveness. Fourth, because God has reconciled us to Godself, we have both a message and ministry of reconciliation.

We can easily become so busy with the activities of church life that the ministry of reconciliation becomes obscured. Think of all the activities in a church: worship, church school, committee meetings, fellowship groups, study groups, men's and women's groups, youth groups, and others. Of course, the ministry of reconciliation can occur in and through these activities. But the opposite of reconciliation—alienation—can happen as well. Paul reminds us of the importance of working for reconciliation with one another and of spreading the message of reconciliation with God.

Paul understood his own ministry as that of reconciliation (verse 20). He was an "ambassador for Christ." God uses Christians to bring the message and ministry of reconciliation to others. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to "be reconciled to God" may seem unnecessary. He has already claimed that Christians are reconciled to God through Christ. However, reconciliation is both a gift and a summons to receive this gift. Because we are reconciled, we are called to live a life of reconciliation, to be ambassadors.

Verse 21 reemphasizes the basis of our reconciliation, Christ's death. Christ was "made" to be sin, not in the sense that he was a sinner, but that he bore the burden of our sins on the cross. Christ's death and resurrection make it possible for those who believe to "become the righteousness of God." That is, through faith in Christ, we are able to live daily by God's grace.

This ministry of reconciliation can be captured in one word—*love*. By love we are claimed by God. In love, Christ died on the cross to reconcile us with God. Through love, we receive the gift of reconciliation. If we are to carry on the ministry of reconciliation in daily living, it will be the result of love. Love unites, brings together, forgives, and heals. The ministry of reconciliation is none other than the ministry of Christ's love.

The Reconciling Father

Read Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32.

A few days ago I lost my driver's license. I had taken it out of my wallet and put it in my gym bag so that I would not have to take my wallet, containing money and credit cards, to the gym. When I looked in my wallet a few days later, I realized there was no driver's license. It was not in my gym bag. It was not with the clothes that had been in the bag. After a careful search, I found the license on the floor next to the dirty clothes hamper. I felt both joy and relief on finding my lost license.

The joy of finding that which is lost is the subject of the three parables in Luke 15. First is the parable of the lost sheep (verses 3-7). Then comes the parable of the lost coin (verses 8-10). The final parable, known as the "prodigal" son, is about a father and two sons (verses 11-32).

Luke describes the occasion for these three parables as the Pharisee's reaction to Jesus welcoming "sinners" (verses 1-2). They grumble that Jesus not only welcomes sinners but eats with them. By eating with sinners, Jesus showed acceptance of them.

The focus of the third parable in Luke 15 is not exclusively on the "prodigal" (a word meaning "wasteful") son. However, the story begins with the younger son, who selfishly demands his share of his inheritance. In doing this while his father is alive, his actions say to the father, "I consider you as dead."

The father complies with his son's arrogant demand, and the son immediately leaves. Because he was the younger son, he would have received a third of the property as compared with the older son's two-thirds inheritance. Quickly, the younger son squanders his money and ends up in the lowest form of employment for a Jew—feeding pigs (verses 13-15).

Realizing how low he has fallen and how hungry he is, the son remembers how the hired hands of his father have it better. So he resolves to return home (verses 16-18). The phrase "he came to himself" has more than one possible meaning. It could mean that the son was remorseful over his wastefulness. Or it could mean he realized his desperate situation and wanted a full belly.

Because he has said, in effect, "I have no father," he cannot return home as a son. So he composes a speech in which he will ask to return home as a servant (verses 18-19).

The homecoming scene in verses 20-24 is moving. The father does not even wait for his son to come to the house but runs and meets him on the road. "Filled with compassion," he embraces and kisses his son, forgiving the son's rejection of him. He treats his son like royalty. The robe is a gift a king would give a visiting dignitary. The ring signifies authority, and the shoes mean freedom (slaves went barefoot). Then the son's homecoming is celebrated with a feast of reconciliation.

However, the older son is also lost, but in a different way. Hearing the celebration, he learns from a servant that the feast is in honor of his younger brother. In anger, he refuses to attend the celebration (verses 25-28). The father, who loves both sons, pleads with him to come to the feast. But the older son, unable to see beyond his jealousy, rehearses the sins of his younger

brother in graphic language (verses 29-30).

The parable ends with the reconciling father reassuring the older son that "all that is mine is yours" (verse 31). He explains his joy over the return of the prodigal, hoping to make his older son understand the necessity of celebration.

As I reread this poignant parable, I found myself identifying with the younger son. I sympathized with this son's desire to strike out on his own, making his way in the world. Isn't the journey to independence one that we all make? And I also could empathize with the youthful mistakes made by the younger son. Heaven knows we all reap the consequences of arrogant pride. I saw in the son's desire to return home my own longing for forgiveness, acceptance, and grace.

But the father of the parable captures my heart. He is generous, loving, and forgiving. He treats both sons with kindness and fairness. His actions are graceful and self-giving. No wonder so many have seen the love and grace of God embodied in this father.

At the end of the parable we do not know whether the older son goes in to the feast of reconciliation. The father's invitation to join in the celebration is left dangling. Will the son go in?

We, too, are invited to participate in the joy of reconciliation by Jesus, the One who saves. Through Jesus, we are reconciled to God. And because we are reconciled to God, we are able to carry on the ministry of reconciliation.

[1]Words Copyright © 1971 by Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

The Promise of God's Future

5

If the role of a prophet is to proclaim God's future, then the three Scripture passages for this Sunday are prophetic. Deutero-Isaiah, the prophet of the Exile, announces that God is about to do a "new thing" for and with the exiled Israelites. This "new thing" is a fresh act of redemption even greater than the Exodus (Isaiah 43:16-21). While Paul is not usually thought of as a prophet, he wrote often and powerfully of the glorious future that awaits those who live "in Christ." In Philippians 3:4b-14, he describes his own break with the past and his "race" toward resurrection. In John 12:1-8, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, unknowingly performs a prophetic act by anointing Jesus' feet with perfume. In doing so, she anticipates Jesus' death.

A New Act of Redemption

Last Sunday, while sitting among the congregation at a local United Methodist Church, I was reminded of the importance of the past. It was the first Sunday of the month, and Holy Communion was being celebrated. Since I was in the pew rather than the pulpit, I was

Read Isaiah 43:16-2

Scriptures for Lent:

Fifth Sunday

Isaiah 43:16-21
Philippians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8

able to focus on the words of "The Great Thanksgiving." Immediately after the congregation responded, "It is right to give our thanks and praise," the pastor began to speak of God's past acts of redemption:

You formed us in your image
and breathed into us the
breath of life.
When we turned away, and
our love failed,
your love remained steadfast.
You delivered us from captivity,
made covenant to be our
sovereign God,
and spoke to us through
your prophets.

(*The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 9)

What God has done in the past, from creation onward, is one reason we lift up our hearts in thanksgiving and praise. During the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, we are reminded of God's past faithfulness.

Another reason we offer God our thanks and praise is because of what God is now doing and what God will do. Yes, the past is important. But so are the present and the future. "The Great Thanksgiving" ends with the hope that the church is "one in ministry to all the world, / until Christ comes in final victory / and we feast at his heavenly banquet" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 10).

The Scripture lesson from Isaiah 43 begins with a reminder of a great act of God's redemption in Israel's past (verses 16-17). This prophet, who proclaimed the end of the exile in Babylonia, recalls the Israelites' miraculous escape from the pursuing Egyptian army. God made a "way in the sea" for the Israelites and destroyed the chariots, horses, and warriors of the Egyptians.

The story of the exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt is the heart of the Passover, which the exiles celebrated each year in Babylonia. The Exodus was understood as God's greatest act of salvation and liberation.

Yet, in verses 18 and 19, Isaiah calls for a fundamental shift of attention from past to future. God is about to do a "new thing," to perform a new act of redemption so marvelous that it will be hailed as a new Exodus. As great as the Exodus was, this "new thing" will be even more remarkable.

While the past is important, to dwell on the past can deprive us of our vitality. When Isaiah writes, "Do not remember the former things," he is cautioning us not to become prisoners of the past. The memories of the past are no substitute for God's present and future acts of salvation. We can no more live off memories of the past than we can be sustained by last week's meals.

Not only individuals can succumb to the temptation to live in the past. Churches can expend

valuable time and energy longing for earlier "glory years." Memories of full pews, financial stability, or large numbers of young people can prevent us from asking, "What new thing is God doing in our congregation and community?" Isaiah's words turn our eyes from the past to God's future.

In Isaiah's time the "new thing" God was about to perform was the end of the Exile. The Exile, which started in 586 B.C., was coming to an end. Cyrus, a Persian king, was becoming a military power. Isaiah perceived that God would use Cyrus as an instrument to release the exiles, allowing them to return home. The events leading to the end of the Exile were already in motion: "Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (verse 19).

Verses 19b-20 describe the joyful journey home for the exiles. Just as God made a path through the sea, now a "way" would be made through the wilderness. All threats to safe travel, represented by the "wild animals," would be dealt with by God. Not only this, that which is essential for life on a long journey— water—would be provided. Just as God provided water and manna during the first exodus, God would sustain God's people on this new exodus.

What is the "new thing" that God is doing in and through us? Today's Scripture moves us to ask this question as we shift our focus from the past to the present and the future. Asking this question assumes that God is present and active in our lives and our world, a God who works in us and others by God's Spirit.

The Exile was one of the bleakest times in Israel's history. The exiles were not only in pain because of being separated from their homeland, some families were torn apart. Only the young, the strong, and the powerful were taken east to Babylonia.

In the pain of tragedy Isaiah proclaimed the hope of a "new thing" that God would do. Will God do any less for us in our times of tragedy and exile?

The people's response was that of praise for this "new thing" (verse 21). The joy of the homecoming would overcome the painful memories of fifty years in a foreign land. God would save God's "chosen," the "people whom I formed for myself."

When we discover God working new acts of redemption in our world, we are moved to "offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 10).

Pressing on Toward God's Future

One Saturday, I took my two sons, who were then six, to the Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, Connecticut. While we were impressed with the vivid colors of

the tropical fish and entertained by the harbor seals, we were in awe of the sharks. At the center of the main room was a huge, round tank filled with different species of sharks. With their rows of gleaming, razor-sharp teeth, they looked dangerous and powerful. As we stood mesmerized by the sharks continually circling in the tank, one of my sons observed, "Dad, they never rest."

Read Philippians 3:4b-14.

An aquarium biologist who was standing nearby overheard my son's comment. He said, "That's right. They can never rest. They must keep moving or they will die." He went on to explain that sharks must keep swimming in order to force water through their gills. Sharks do not have the ability to suck in water like some fish.

As humans, we must also keep moving forward or die. Death could be defined as "lack of movement." Life means movement, direction, and energy. Another way of stating this truth is: to live is to move into the future.

In Philippians 3:4b-14, Paul writes of moving into God's future. Some persons in the church at Philippi were trying to prevent this forward movement. They argued that Gentile (non-Jewish) men must first be circumcised before they could be Christians. Paul argued forcefully against such a practice, calling these persons "dogs" and "evil workers" (3:2). Paul accused them of putting their trust in a past ritual rather than God's future in Christ.

Paul reminded his opponents that he had more reason than they did to boast of his Jewish heritage. He states his impeccable credentials as a Jew in verses 4b-6. Not only was he circumcised on the eighth day according to the law, as a Pharisee he was "blameless" under the law. Paul had done everything his opponents were requiring of Christians, and more. As far as his Jewish heritage was concerned, Paul had a perfect score.

Yet all the status and prestige Paul achieved as a result of his heritage he counted as worthless when compared with "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus" (verses 7-8). Paul's conversion to Christianity led to a transformation of what he valued. When compared to the life of faith in Christ, Paul considered the status and prestige of his past as "rubbish." He gave up all the benefits of his status as a Pharisee in order to "gain Christ."

What Paul was describing is that inner transformation called conversion. To commit our life to Christ results in a re-valuing of what is important to us. Things like wealth, status, power, prestige, and social class no longer determine our values. We discover a new and richer sense of

worth in our loving relationship with Christ.

In verse 9, Paul continues the thoughts from verse 8. Here is the heart of Paul's understanding of salvation. To "be found in" Christ means a new and right relationship ("righteousness") with God. To try to achieve a law-based righteousness is to attempt to earn that which can only be received as a gift. Salvation is a gift of God's grace. Faith is our acceptance of and commitment to live in light of God's grace as revealed in Jesus Christ.

To "know Christ" (verse 10) is not to possess intellectual knowledge but to participate in a Christlike life. Paul proceeds to outline in verses 10-11 what it means to "know Christ." It means: (1) to experience the "power of his resurrection" in daily life, (2) to share in Christ's sufferings, and (3) to become like Christ in death. In other words, Paul wants to move toward God's future.

By leading a Christlike life of self-giving love, Paul expressed the hope that, like Christ, he might be raised from the dead (verse 11). Even though he used the word *attain*, Paul made it clear that he considered resurrection as a gift from God (verses 12-14). Resurrection is not a possession but a promise. Apparently, Paul's opponents claimed to have secured a guarantee of resurrection. Paul made no such claim.

Anyone who has ever attempted to run a long-distance race can appreciate the athletic metaphor Paul uses in verses 12-14. He speaks of pressing on and "straining forward" toward a "goal" and a "prize." In a race the focus is not on where you have been but on where you are going. The runner must keep pressing forward to the finish line. For Christians, the finish line in the "race" of faith is resurrection. Through faith in Christ, we understand dying as a new beginning rather than a final ending.

Ultimately, the Christian life is a process. Growth and movement take place. Living as a Christian calls for being dynamic rather than static. But the movement of the life of faith in Christ is not aimless wandering. We are moving in the direction of God's future and toward the finish line of resurrection.

As Christians, we are "works-in-progress." To be "in Christ" is to embark on a lifelong journey of faith in which we become more loving, more hopeful, and more faithful. Like the sharks, we must keep moving forward, toward God's future, in order to live fully and abundantly.

Mary Anticipates What Is to Come

I did not realize that such a simple gesture could mean so much. As I was walking out of the church office on my way to make a hospital visit, I saw the altar flowers, already used, sitting on a table

next to the secretary's desk. They happened to be an arrangement of red and yellow tulips.

Read John 12:1-8. Almost as an afterthought, I decided to take the flowers to the woman I was visiting. She was delighted to see the flowers. Tulips were her favorite. As one of the first flowers of spring, they reminded her of new life.

A few days later the woman died. When I met with her daughter to plan the funeral, she said, "You don't know how much those tulips meant to Mom. The day before she died, she asked me to plant them on her grave." The tulips were so much more than a room decoration to the dying woman. They represented God's promise of resurrection.

Sometimes the simplest of actions expresses an unintended depth of meaning. The breaking of bread becomes a symbol for Christ's broken body. The sprinkling of water on a child's head becomes a symbol that says, "This child is God's child." Rising after kneeling at an altar becomes a symbol of the raising of resurrection. The story of Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet is yet another instance of a simple action communicating a rich meaning.

In the Book of John we meet Mary, one of the sisters of Lazarus. In Chapter 11, Mary and her sister, Martha, play major roles in the raising of Lazarus. Jesus calls Mary for a conversation when he is outside Bethany. She falls at his feet weeping and tells Jesus that if he had been there, her brother would not have died. Then Jesus joins her in weeping (verses 32-35).

While the Pharisees react to Lazarus's raising with fear and hatred, Mary reacts with love. Six days before the Passover, Jesus is invited to dinner at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (12:1-2).

Sometime during the dinner, Mary took a pound of expensive perfume, poured it over Jesus' feet, and wiped his feet with her hair (verse 3). Judas was quick to point out the extravagance of her gesture. A pound was a large amount of perfume and would have been worth about three hundred denarii, nearly a year's wages for a laborer.

Judas asked why Mary's gift was not sold and the money given to the poor (verse 5). On the surface, Judas's argument seems reasonable. He seems to be expressing concern for the poor and condemning wastefulness. But we learn from the author of John that Judas's motives were not so pure. He discredits Judas as a selfish thief (verse 6).

Jesus interpreted Mary's gift, not as wasteful, but as prophetic. Unknowingly, she had anointed Jesus' body for burial. In Jesus' time perfumes and spices were used to anoint dead bodies before they were laid in tombs. John

19:38-40 tells us that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, secret disciples of Jesus, anointed Jesus' body with spices before sealing it in a tomb.

Mary was simply expressing her love for Jesus and her gratitude for his saving her brother's life. Yet her actions take on a deeper and richer meaning. She anticipated God's future. Her actions point to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In wiping Jesus' feet with her hair, Mary also anticipated another event—Jesus' washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1-11). Mary was a servant, humbling herself at Jesus' feet. In doing so, she pointed the way for us to follow Jesus—as servants.

I sometimes wonder if we are missing the sense of humility that Mary demonstrated. Rather than seeking to serve Jesus in humility, we have too often become servants of success and power. When we seek "church growth," we are often seeking more church members rather than growth in faith, hope, and love in our lives. We ought to seek to make new disciples for Christ. Yet ministry in the name of Christ is humble work. It cannot be done for glory or the admiration of others, or it violates its purpose. To humbly minister to others in the name of Christ is an act of loving service.

Jesus' words in John 12:8, "You always have the poor with you," may at first seem insensitive. However, Jesus was not encouraging us to ignore the poor or their needs. His ministry reached out to the poor, the lost, and the least of his society. He preached "good news" to the poor (Luke 4:18). Those persons he healed were primarily among the poor; to be sick was to be poor in that society.

We cannot understand the first part of John 12:8 apart from what follows: "But you do not always have me." Jesus' words point us to the ultimate importance of the cross. Yes, to sell the perfume and give the money to the poor would have been a good thing. But, when faced with a crisis (Jesus' upcoming death), extravagant action was warranted. Mary's anointing of Jesus acknowledged the primary significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The future that Mary unknowingly anticipated was the "new thing" God would do in Jesus Christ. This new act of redemption was unparalleled and unique. By humbling herself and giving Jesus a precious gift, Mary participated in God's new act of redemption. May we follow her example by offering all that we have, and all that we are, to Jesus.

God's promised future awaits us. Jesus, the One who saves, has saved us. By Jesus' death and resurrection (past), he enables us to live abundantly and joyfully (present) and to die with the confidence that we will be with God eternally (future).

The Exaltation in Humility

6

As I write these words a solar eclipse is occurring. At 11:48 A.M. the moon started moving across the sun's path. Now, at 1:30 P.M., the moon has eclipsed almost 90 percent of the sun. The light outside is eerie because of the unusual midday shadows. In ancient times eclipses were feared, and people would hide indoors and pray. By 3:30 P.M. the eclipse will be over.

This natural eclipse reminds me of another kind of eclipse that can occur in our life. Our own needs, concerns, and desires can become so important to us that they block out anything else. Instead of practicing self-denial, we become self-indulgent. Rather than loving selflessly, we love selfishly. In other words, the opposite of humility occurs in this eclipse of the soul.

The Scripture passages for this Sunday show the exaltation and victory possible in humility. In Isaiah 50:4-9a, we see the humiliation and vindication of a figure called God's "Servant." Paul used an early Christian hymn in Philippians 2:5-11 to call Christians to imitate Christ's humility. And, in the story of Jesus' suffering and death, we will discover that Jesus' humiliation on the cross is, at the same time, his exaltation.

Scriptures for Lent

Sixth Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 23:1-49

The Suffering Servant

I did not want it done to me. And I did not want to do it.

Read Isaiah 50:4-9a.

We had just shared in a simple supper of soup and sandwiches on Holy Thursday evening. After the meal, the pastor stood and read the account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet from John 13. As she read, I could identify with Peter, who did not want Jesus to wash his feet. Peter saw the act as too humiliating for his Lord and Master to perform. Foot washing was a servant's job.

Then the pastor went into a nearby classroom and brought out a towel and washbasin. She explained that we were going to wash one another's feet as a way of reenacting the events of Jesus' last night with the disciples. One by one we removed our shoes. Then she washed the feet of the man next to her. He washed the feet of the woman next to him, and so on until it became my turn. I was surprised at how cool and soothing the water felt. My tired feet were revived by the washing.

But it was when I took the wash basin and towel and knelt at the feet of the man next to me that I began to understand. I was embarrassed to take hold of my neighbor's foot and wash it. The foot smelled, and I could see dirt under the toenails. The act was humiliating. But that is what being a servant is about—humbling oneself.

One of the key figures of Isaiah 40–55 is God's "Servant." These chapters, written during the Exile, include four "Servant Songs" (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13–53:12) in which the sufferings and vindication of God's Servant are described.

While the poetry that portrays the Servant's sufferings is detailed, the identity of the Servant is not revealed. Is a particular individual the Servant? Or is the entire nation of Israel God's Servant? Or is the Servant a group of faithful within Israel? Biblical scholars are divided on these options, some arguing that the Servant is all three.

Whether the Servant is an individual, group, nation, or "all of the above" will probably not be resolved. For our purposes, what is important about God's Servant is that the Gospel writers saw in these Servant Songs a portrayal of Jesus' suffering and death. For the Gospel writers, these four songs were descriptive of the Messiah's humiliation and vindication.

The third of the four Servant Songs describes the Servant as a teacher who sustains the weary with a word of hope (Isaiah 50:4). As a teacher, the Servant is also a learner; he listens "as those who are taught." The Servant hears God's word, the Word that will "stand forever" (40:8b). The Servant is an obedient learner, not rebellious (50:5).

The Servant's instruction includes not only hearing God's word but also undergoing suffering for God's sake (verse 6). The Servant willingly bears beatings, pain, and insults. Rather than trying to escape humiliation, the Servant obediently endures it.

We all find facing the pain of humiliation difficult. When such suffering comes to us, our first reaction is to avoid it at all costs. After all, who seeks to suffer? But there is a kind of suffering that teaches obedience to God—holy suffering. Suffering is holy when it results from being faithful to God. This suffering may come in the form of teasing about our faith, in a misunderstanding of our motives, or even in subtle rejections. Our efforts to help another may be viewed with suspicion. Our attempts to be peacemakers may make us the object of hostility. But holy suffering strengthens our faith (Romans 5:3-5).

Isaiah 50:7 gives the reason the Servant is able to endure suffering. What seems to be disgrace becomes vindication because God is with him. In other words, the Servant faces suffering with the confidence that he does so in the service of God.

A courtroom scene comes to mind when reading verses 8-9a. Here a series of questions is asked. These questions are challenges of the Servant to his adversaries, the ones who are trying to humiliate him. The Servant believes that because God, the ultimate judge, is on his side, no human can pronounce him guilty.

No wonder the early church found in these Servant Songs a description of Jesus' suffering. Jesus' passion was understood in the same terms as the suffering of the servant: he was vindicated by God. This portrayal of the "righteous sufferer" fits Jesus perfectly.

Through faith, we are able to accept our role as "suffering servant." When we suffer for a good cause, especially one that comes from our faith, our pain is not humiliating but vindicating. Suffering for God is not shame but glory.

A Humble Mind

Read Philippians 2:5-11.

The image that popped into my mind when I read this passage could not be avoided. It involves one of the characters from the television series *Star Trek*. The First Officer of the Starship *Enterprise*, Spock, is part human and part Vulcan. As a Vulcan, Spock has the ability to merge his mind with another person. To perform the Vulcan "mind-meld" he places his hand, spiderlike, over a person's face and concentrates. Spock uses this talent to find out information that someone is withholding.

Of course, *Star Trek* and the Vulcan mind-meld are fantasy. Paul, however, speaks to the reality of the idea of sharing a mind-

set in Chapter 2 of Philippians. He begins by encouraging the Christians at Philippi to "be of the same mind" (verse 2) and to regard others "in humility" (verse 3). Then he admonishes them to consider the interests of others before their own needs (verse 4). The mind-set Paul wants his readers to share is that of love, compassion, and sympathy (verse 1).

Paul shifts gears in verse 5 as he describes a mind-set "in Christ Jesus." Biblical scholars disagree about how to interpret this verse. Is Paul calling us to somehow imitate Christ's mind? Is he asking us to regard one another as Christ has regarded us? Or are we to regard one another from the same perspective as we regard Christ?

We can be guided in our interpretation of verse 5 by remembering a passage we studied earlier. In 2 Corinthians 5:16-17, Paul describes the new perspective from which we regard, not only Christ, but each other—as "new creations." Thus, verse 5 could be paraphrased: "Regard each other from the new mind-set you have been given through faith in Christ."

In Philippians 2:6-11, Paul makes use of an early Christian hymn to describe the "mind" we see in Christ. The reasons these verses are thought to be a hymn quoted by Paul are that they are poetry and that the language used is different than Paul's own. Nowhere else in Paul's letters are words and concepts such as "form of God," "emptied himself," and "form of a slave" used by Paul.

This hymn has two distinct sections. Verses 6-8 can be understood in terms of descending. The hymn begins with a preexistent Christ who is equal to God. This Christ "empties himself" of his divinity and takes on human form and even the "form of a slave." Christ, who was equal to God, becomes equal to humans.

We have in these verses a description of the free surrender of divine authority. The Greek word used for this surrender, *kenosis*, means "self-emptying." Do we know how to "empty" ourselves, not of divine authority, but of self-interest? Paul outlines a Christian way of life that is empty of self-interest, self-preoccupation, and self-indulgence. In doing so, he points the way to Christian love. To love as Christ loved we must become empty of our own needs and concerns so that we can be open and attentive to others.

I know a man who works on Wall Street. He has a full life. By "full" I mean that his life is filled with work, business travel, and entertaining customers. But his life may be too full. His wife is not sure whether he loves her anymore. His children are growing up without really knowing their father. He cannot become involved in his church or in community activities because he is

"too busy." This person could use some of the self-emptying Paul wrote about.

The low point of the "descending" portion of this hymn appears in verse 8. In obedience Jesus humbles himself and accepts death on a cross. Thus, the hymn has moved from the height of equality with God to the depth of humanness.

Many Greeks found it difficult to accept the idea that God entered the human condition and died on a cross. In the opening chapter of the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, he writes, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1:22-23). Jesus, who was equal to God, dying on a cross seemed like folly to educated Greeks. The thought that the Son of God would willingly give up his divine power and submit to a criminal's death was repugnant to the Greek mind.

For Paul, however, the fact that Jesus humbled himself in death was true power and genuine wisdom. In calling us to this same mind-set, Paul challenges us to discover strength in humility.

Humility can seem so weak and ineffective when compared with self-confident conceit. Our society lives by the slogan, "If you're going to hear music, you'd better blow your own horn." It seems that the self-promoters, those who are anything but humble, reap the rewards in business and in politics.

Yet millions of people, humbly living lives of love and compassion, are quietly making a difference in our world. Like ants building an anthill, everyone doing a small part results in large changes. These people lead Christlike lives, not in public glory, but in private integrity. We see them every day. We work with them, worship with them, and share life with them. Their humility is so powerful that seeing them makes us want to become more like them.

The second part of the hymn, verses 9-11, describes a startling and dramatic reversal. Jesus ascends to the highest position of honor and adoration. What seems to be humiliation (death on a cross) results in exaltation (resurrection). Because he humbles himself in death, Jesus receives the highest name ("Lord") and is worthy of worship, homage, and praise.

Paul tells us that, from a Christlike mind-set, humiliation for God's sake is really exaltation. While pride produces self-exaltation, humility produces God-exaltation. Mary's Song (also known as the Magnificat) echoes this understanding:

> [God] has scattered the
> proud in the thoughts of
> their hearts.
> He has brought down the

powerful from their
thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.
(Luke 1:51b-52)

The God who brings down the proud and lifts up those who are humble was incarnate in Christ Jesus, who humbled himself and was exalted. When we are willing to possess a "humble mind," God will lift us up to new life.

When Humiliation Is Exaltation

As nervous as an expectant father, I paced the floor of my office on Passion/Palm Sunday. In ten minutes the final rehearsal would begin. I gathered my notes and went to the sanctuary where members of the confirmation class were beginning to trickle in. For one of their confirmation projects, they had chosen to present the Passion story during the worship service in a "readers theater." Each of them would play a different part—the Narrator, Jesus, Peter, Judas, Pilate, Caiaphas, the disciples, soldiers, and the crowd.

Read Luke 23:1-49.

The rehearsal the day before had been a disaster. I could not get the young people beyond their silliness. In exasperation, I gave them a stern warning that they had better take their parts seriously on Sunday. The entire congregation, including their parents, would be listening, I reminded them. They begged to have a final rehearsal an hour before the beginning of the worship service, and I agreed.

The final rehearsal went well. The youths had apparently practiced their parts at home. Less than an hour later, they were standing before the congregation and playing their roles in this passion drama. Sitting in the congregation, I tried to read their faces. I saw fear and nervousness, intensity and interest. For some of these youth, it was the first time they had really heard the complete story of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. When it was over, I could see that both the congregation and the confirmands had been moved by the tragedy of Jesus' crucifixion.

For a few moments these young people had been inside the Passion story. They were no longer observers but actors in this tragic drama. The power of the Passion story is that it can draw us into it, transforming us into participants in the story of Jesus' suffering and death.

As with any powerful drama, the Passion story is composed of several "acts." In Luke's Gospel, the first act begins with the Last Supper (22:7-23). This critical event is followed by the disciples arguing over which of them is the greatest (22:24-30) and Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial (verses 31-34). Jesus then goes to pray on the Mount of Olives (verses 39-46) and is there betrayed by Judas

and arrested (verses 47-53). Peter's denial takes place (verses 54-62), and Jesus is given a "trial" before the Sanhedrin (the ruling council of the Jews).

Luke 23:1-49 contains the final acts of Jesus' passion, beginning with his interrogation by Pilate and ending with his death. Each of these acts in the passion drama shows the injustice, humiliation, and suffering of an innocent Jesus.

The first act of Luke 23 features Pilate declaring Jesus' innocence in the face of false accusations by the Sanhedrin (verses 1-5). When Pilate hears that Jesus is from Galilee, he sees a way to rid himself of Jesus by sending him to Herod, the Roman governor of the area that included Galilee.

In the second act, Herod questions Jesus, who remains silent (verses 6-12). Like the suffering servant, Jesus is oppressed and afflicted but "did not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Herod and his soldiers mock Jesus and send him back to Pilate.

The third act (verses 13-25) shows Pilate again declaring Jesus' innocence while Jesus' accusers intensify their demands for Jesus' death. Finally, the crowds are incited to ask for Jesus' crucifixion and the release of Barabbas, a murderer. Their shouts become so insistent that Pilate caves in to their demands. Ironically, the innocent Jesus is sentenced to crucifixion and the guilty Barabbas released.

The act detailing the crucifixion is the longest in the passion drama (verses 26-43). The soldiers lead Jesus to the place of crucifixion, called "The Skull," along with two criminals. Then they deepen the humiliation and agony of crucifixion by gambling for Jesus' clothing. The passersby cruelly taunt him. The inscription hung over Jesus in sarcasm reveals the truth about him: "This is the King of the Jews" (verse 38).

The conversation between Jesus and the criminals crucified with him is unique to the Gospel of Luke. Their words represent two ways of responding to the crucified Messiah. One criminal joins the crowd in mocking Jesus; the other pronounces Jesus' innocence. When the second criminal asks to be remembered by Jesus, he is rewarded with the assurance, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (verse 43).

In the final act in the Passion story, Jesus dies (verses 44-49). His last words are, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." The centurion standing guard at the cross also pronounces Jesus innocent. The women who had been following him watch his death "from a distance." Some of these same women will be the first persons at the tomb on Easter morning (24:10).

Luke's telling of the Passion story emphasizes an innocent Jesus who is put to death unjustly. Jesus closely follows the pattern of the Servant portrayed in Isaiah's Servant Songs. He is silent in the

face of false accusations; he endures humiliation without a fight; he suffers as an act of obedience to God. Jesus is a righteous sufferer who "became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

In the Passion story we see the very worst that human beings, including you and me, are capable of. In cruelly and brutally executing an innocent person, humanity reaches its lowest point. Jesus' humiliation not only occurs through the beatings, the mocking, and the crucifixion but also happens in the betrayal, denial, and desertion of his closest companions. Therefore, the cross stands for the most monstrous evil human beings can perform.

Yet the cross also stands for the highest God can accomplish. By obediently submitting to crucifixion, Jesus shows a love for humanity that knows no limits. The cross is the ultimate act of love for a sinful world. On the cross, God changes Jesus' humiliation into exaltation because his dying is an act of love.

God's love has the power to transform the humiliations we undergo for Christ's sake into something praiseworthy and glorious. When we follow the Crucified One in the way of self-giving love, we discover a new strength within to bear the sufferings and pains of life victoriously.

Through this Sunday's Scripture lessons, we have drawn nearer to Jesus, the One who saves. We have seen his saving act on the cross and have heard the call to follow his way of humble service. But the story is not yet complete. The cross is not the final word about Jesus. In the next lesson we will see the marvelous conclusion to the Passion story.

The Victory of Resurrection

7

If you listen carefully to the hymns of the Easter season, you will realize that they are, most of all, hymns of victory. Words and notes of triumph, joy, gladness, and praise resound on Easter. For, on Easter, we celebrate the greatest victory of all—resurrection and new life.

Strains of victory can also be heard in the Scripture passages for Easter Day. Psalm 118 is a song of victory that was sung when a triumphant king returned from battle. From Peter's sermon at Caesarea we learn that he and the other apostles were witnesses to the victory of resurrection (Acts 10:34-43). Paul reminds us that Christian faith is resurrection faith as he describes God's triumph over the "last enemy"—death (1 Corinthians 15:19-26). In the Gospel of Luke's account of Easter morning, Jesus' raising is first discovered by the women who come to the tomb. There two figures in dazzling white announce the victory of Jesus' resurrection: "He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24:1-12).

We will discover through these Scripture lessons that the triumph of resurrection is not to be admired from afar but is a victory in which we participate.

Scriptures for Easter Day

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Acts 10:34-43
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Luke 24:1-12

A Song of Victory

I felt like singing. We all felt like singing. We had just won our first game. The game was thrilling, with the lead changing back and forth several times. At the end of four quarters, the score was tied. Then, in overtime, we won. The fifth and sixth grade boys basketball team I was coaching had triumphed. The boys jumped up and down excitedly, and I slapped "high fives" with a few of them.

Read Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24.

But wait. I was considering the win my victory. I was taking too much credit. And so were the boys. Yes, we had played well and hard. But who had given us the opportunity to play? Who had given us the abilities we possessed? Who had given us the life and energy to be able to play?

We can never take complete credit for any of the victories we win in life. For behind every victory is God, who has provided us with the breath of life.

The psalmist knew who gave the Israelites victory over their enemies. Psalm 118 was used as a litany when a victorious king returned from battle. It begins in thanksgiving, using a response repeated several times in the psalm: "his [God's] steadfast love endures forever!" (verses 1-4). This communal thanksgiving is followed by the king's personal thanksgiving to God, including a description of his "distress" (verses 5-14). In verse 14, the king acknowledges the Lord as the source of his strength and of Israel's victory.

The scene shifts in verses 15-16. We see the camp of the Israelites erupting into a refrain of victory: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly." Verse 17 predicts the long reign of the king. The defeats and losses suffered by the king are viewed as divine discipline (verse 18).

To understand verses 19-20, imagine the long victory procession of the king arriving at the gates of the Temple courtyard. He requests entry for the purpose of giving thanks to God (verse 19). Then the Temple priests reply that only "the righteous" shall enter into the Temple to make offerings (verse 20). The king points to the fact that God has "answered" his prayer for victory and has become his "salvation," thus qualifying him to enter the Temple (verse 21).

The psalmist marvels at God's steadfast love in verses 22-23. The rejected stone has become the cornerstone. Israel, rejected and despised by the surrounding nations, has become the foundation of God's plan of salvation. God has chosen this insignificant and unlikely people to bring God's message of salvation to the world.

A famous verse of praise, entirely appropriate for Easter,

concludes Psalm 118. Verse 24 proclaims:

> This is the day that the LORD has made;
> let us rejoice and be glad in it.

No wonder our celebrations of Easter make use of Psalm 118. Verse 22 is quoted in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17), as well as First Peter (2:7). The early church understood that Jesus was the "rejected stone" who had become the "cornerstone" in God's plan of salvation. The ultimate act of rejection (the cross) has become the means for the ultimate act of redemption (the Resurrection).

What else can we say of Easter but, "This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (verse 23)? Yes, we should praise God for our personal victories when they come. But there is a victory much greater and more worthy of praise than anything we could achieve—the raising of Jesus from the dead.

Witnesses to Victory

In the years immediately following the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter was the central leader of the church.

Read Acts 10:34-43.

Peter's primacy was established during Jesus' ministry when Peter served as the spokesperson for the disciples. His confession of Jesus' identity demonstrated both courage and assertiveness: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). Of course, this confession was quickly followed by a rebuke of Peter's refusal to accept Jesus' death. Peter is also well-known for his denial of Jesus prior to the Crucifixion. In spite of Peter's human failings, however, he was the undisputed leader of the disciples.

When Peter described his most important role, it was as a "witness." Peter would not have been the powerful leader he was if it were not for his witness of the Resurrection. The Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection place Peter among the first to see the empty tomb, as well as among the first to encounter the risen Christ.

Peter's preaching in Acts is fundamentally witnessing to the Resurrection. His sermon at Caesarea, recorded in Acts 10:34-43, serves as a prime example of how Peter fulfilled his role as a witness. This sermon marks Peter's first to uncircumcised Gentiles. Until this point, his preaching was directed to Jews in and around Jerusalem.

As Peter began to take the Christian message beyond the bounds of Judea, he affirmed God's impartiality (verse 34). He proclaimed a God who ignores national, racial, and ethnic distinctions. People in "every nation" are acceptable to God as

long as they "fear" (respect) God and do "what is right" (verse 35). Peter was not advocating a type of works-righteousness but a life of faith in God (verse 43).

Peter summarized the message of Jesus as that of "peace." Peace, as it is used here, means "wholeness" or "salvation," as in the Hebrew word *shalom* (verse 36). This message was spread after Jesus' baptism throughout Judea, not only through Jesus' words, but through his deeds of "healing" and "doing good" (verses 37-38). Jesus was able to spread the message of God's peace because he was endowed with the Holy Spirit. This same Holy Spirit infused Peter and the other apostles gathered on Pentecost with the power to proclaim the gospel (Acts 2).

Peter and his fellow apostles were witnesses in three ways. First, they witnessed Jesus' deeds while he was alive. Second, they witnessed his death on the cross (verse 39). Third, they were witnesses to his resurrection (verses 40-41). Peter told of eating and drinking with Jesus after he rose from the dead. Remember that, in Peter's time, sharing a meal was more than eating food together; it was a sign of reconciliation. Therefore, Jesus' eating with Peter and the other disciples was an act of forgiveness.

Peter's preaching was basically testimony (verse 42). As a witness to the Resurrection, he testified to Jesus' sovereign status as "judge of the living and the dead." Note that this phrase is included in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds (*The United Methodist Hymnal,* 880 and 882).

But Peter was not alone in his testimony about Jesus. He stood in a long line of "prophets," who also testified that Jesus is the one who forgives sins (verse 43). Peter's sermon ended with the affirmation that everyone who believes in Jesus "receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Witness is a loaded word in our time. Many different images pop into our minds when hearing "witness," ranging from Jehovah's Witnesses knocking on doors to the "social witness" of the church. On the surface, witnessing seems to be a complex set of actions. However, in its most basic form, to witness is to share the good news of the gospel in word and deed.

Actually, we are always "witnessing" to that which is important to us. We witness to our priorities by how we spend our time, how we treat other persons, how we spend our money, and what we say to others. If our time, energy, and resources are focused on our own pleasure and gain, then we have testified to others what is of greatest value to us. If we give freely of our time and energy to causes greater than ourselves, we have also testified to our priorities. We witness by how we live daily.

Peter's witness of the risen Christ empowered him to testify with vigor and conviction. The aftermath of Peter's sermon, found in verses 44-48, testifies to the power at work in Peter's preaching. While Peter preached, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on those listening. A mini-Pentecost occurred among the Gentiles hearing Peter. The response to the presence of the Spirit was to baptize these new converts in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter's witness of the victory of resurrection led him to share that greatest of victories with the world.

Victory Over the Last Enemy

I do not think of myself as having enemies. Sure, there are people I do not get along with and a few with whom I share a mutual dislike. But I would not call these persons my "enemies." Labeling someone an "enemy" is difficult for me to do. The word *enemy* seems so final.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:19-26.

As a nation, we seem to have moved away from categorizing other nations as "enemies." In the World Wars we were fighting against specific enemies. During the Cold War, many considered the Communists as our enemies. But we are not at war with anyone at present. We now live in a "global village" where it is risky for a nation to declare other nations as enemies.

Our aversion to the label "enemy" was not shared by those persons writing the materials included in the Scriptures. The Book of Psalms alone includes over seventy-five references to "enemies." However, by the time of the New Testament, "enemy" is used more sparingly. Paul only uses it a few times. In this Sunday's passage he refers to death as an enemy.

Yet the resurrection of Jesus was a victory over death. The opening words of the Easter hymn "Thine Be the Glory" announce that victory:

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.

(*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 308)

Chapter 15 of First Corinthians is entirely devoted to the subject of the Resurrection. It seems that some persons in the church at Corinth questioned the doctrine of resurrection (15:12). Paul launches an eloquent defense of the resurrection of Christ as the central tenet of the Christian faith. He argues that Christian faith is, first and foremost, faith in the Resurrection.

Verse 19 is the conclusion of an argument beginning in verse 12. Paul asserts that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then

Christ was not raised. And if Christ was not raised, then there is no basis for Christian faith. Paul concludes by contending that not to believe in Christ's resurrection and hope for our own raising is pitiable.

Paul begins a new section in verse 20 by declaring that Christ has "in fact" been raised from the dead. He then describes Christ's raising as the "first fruits of those who have died." The "first fruits" of the harvest means that there will be more to come. Christ's resurrection is a kind of down payment on future resurrection for all who believe in Christ.

Paul then draws a parallel between Adam and Christ. Just as death entered humanity through Adam (the first human) so does new life come through Christ (verses 21-22). To the affirmation that "all will be made alive in Christ," Paul adds an "order" for resurrection. The first raised was Christ. Then those who "belong to Christ" will be raised at Christ's final coming (verse 23). Here Paul is not trying to give a precise description of the future but is proclaiming the hope of new life.

Finally, says Paul, "the end" will come (verse 24). The "end" is the fulfillment of God's kingdom. Every "ruler," "authority," and "power" opposed to the kingdom of God will be defeated and destroyed. Christ will reign until all these "enemies" are subjugated (verse 25). Then death, "the last enemy," will be destroyed (verse 26).

This picture of the victory over death is strikingly similar to the one in Revelation 21:4, which says:

> "[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes.
> Death will be no more;
> mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
> for the first things have passed away."

In his description of the victory of the Resurrection, Paul points us to a future free of evil and destruction. He envisions a future liberated from death. For death, understood as alienation from God, is the "enemy" of new life.

Through the raising of Jesus, God conquers all the "enemies" of the cross—hatred, fear, destruction, despair, and death. This victory over death is one in which we can participate daily. Because of Christ's resurrection we are empowered to live a resurrected life of faith, hope, and love. When we live such a life, we will discover that death, in its many forms, no longer has power over us. We will discover a new freedom to live fully and wholly in the present, free from anxiety about the future. Through Christ, God has assured our future.

He Has Risen!

Luke's drama of Jesus' crucifixion ends with these words: "But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance,

watching these things" (23:49). We see "the women" a short time later following Joseph of Arimathea as he lays the body of Jesus in a tomb. This is done hurriedly because the Day of Preparation for the Passover will begin at sundown, and nobody can be buried after that time (23:55). "The women" then go to prepare the spices to anoint Jesus' body, waiting until after the sabbath (Saturday), as was prescribed by the law.

Read Luke 24:1-12.

On the "first day of the week" (Sunday), we again encounter these women who have witnessed the Crucifixion and the burial of Jesus. They are referred to as "they" in the story of Easter until they are named in 24:10. These women come to the tomb as early as possible, "at early dawn," to anoint Jesus' body with spices (24:1).

These women, who so lovingly and carefully prepared the spices for Jesus' burial, are about to encounter a reality beyond their expectation and imagination. They find the stone sealing the tomb rolled away. When they enter the tomb, they discover that Jesus' body is gone (verses 2-3).

How would you have reacted to an empty tomb if you had been there on Easter morning? Would you have been terrified? Would you have been angry, thinking Jesus' body had been stolen? Would you have been confused?

Luke tells us that these women are at first "perplexed" by the empty tomb (verse 4). Then two men suddenly appear. Their clothes are "dazzling," calling to mind Luke's description of Jesus' appearance at the Transfiguration (9:28-36). There two men also appear—Moses and Elijah (representing the Law and the Prophets). For Luke the Transfiguration is a glimpse of the Resurrection. By linking the Resurrection with the Transfiguration, Luke wants us to understand that Jesus' raising was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. This link is also made in 24:27 when Jesus teaches the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The women quickly move from perplexity to terror. The two white-clothed men tell them that they are looking for Jesus in the wrong place; he has been raised (verse 5). The men remind the women of Jesus' own predictions of his passion, death, and resurrection (9:22, 44; 17:25).

Hearing Jesus' own words repeated by these two strangers, the women remember and rush to share the news with the eleven remaining disciples and "all the rest" (24:8-9). Thus, the women move from confusion to terror to faith. They are the first to believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead.

In verses 10-11, three of the women are identified by name. Their story of the empty tomb, the two strangers, and the Resurrection is viewed with disbelief and called

an "idle tale." Peter, however, wants to see for himself. He runs to the tomb and looks in. His reaction is not belief but amazement (verse 12). Peter will believe when he encounters the risen Christ (verse 34). So also, the rest of the disciples believe only when they see the risen Lord (verses 31, 36).

Just as with the persons in Luke's Easter story, the news of Christ's raising has the power to evoke different reactions in us. We may experience the initial confusion of the women or the fear that followed the confusion. We may also have our doubts about the Resurrection, as the disciples did, or simply react to the story with amazement like Peter's. These reactions are not wrong but can be ways that we move to faith in the risen Christ. How often faith begins in confusion, fear, doubt, and wonder.

The reaction that Luke and the other Gospel writers are seeking, however, is faith. Regarding the Resurrection, faith is not so much a belief in the historical details of how Jesus' resurrection occurred but is a commitment to live a new and resurrected life. Jesus' raising means that we can live the abundant life of faith, hope, and love to which he calls us. In this way the victory of the Resurrection becomes our victory.

We have reached the end of a journey that began with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and ends with Jesus being raised by God. Throughout these forty days of Lent, we have been accompanied on this journey by Jesus, the One who saves. Easter is not really the end of the journey but a new beginning for us. Every day is a day of resurrection and new life. Every day is one more step in the journey with Jesus, the One who saves.

1. Begin the session by discussing the meaning of the season of Lent. Lent comes from the Old English word *lencten*, which refers to the lengthening of days during the spring. One way to think of Lent is as a season of increasing light, climaxing with the dawn of the Resurrection morning.

Read the following quotation from the "Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline" found in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*:

> I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,
> to observe a holy Lent:
> by self-examination and repentance;
> by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
> and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. (Page 322)

Then discuss the following questions:

- What themes do you associate with the Lenten season?
- What hymns and other music reflect these themes?
- What are some of the ways you plan to observe a holy Lent?

2. Read the first paragraph of the section "Remembering Whose We Are," pages 5–7, to set the scene for someone to read aloud Deuteronomy 26:1-13.

Discuss the following questions:

- Why was the gift of the land so important to the Israelites?
- How did offering first fruits acknowledge the Giver (God) of the land?
- How do we express our gratitude to God for all that God has given us?

3. Focus on the confession found in Deuteronomy 26:5-10a. Within these few verses the entire history of Israel, from Abraham to Moses, is recounted. Remind the group of the following events: God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1); the Hebrews migrating to Egypt during a famine (Genesis 37–46, the story of Joseph); slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1:8-22); the release of the Israelites, including the first Passover (Exodus 7–13); and the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites (Exodus 16–40). Then ask the following questions:

- In what confession of faith is our Christian history recounted? (Hint: read the Apostles' Creed.)
- How does Deuteronomy 26:5-10a compare and contrast with the Apostles' Creed?

4. Lead the group members in reading Psalm 91 responsively (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 810). Then ask the following questions:

- What words does the psalmist use to describe God's protection?
- What are the times in your life when Psalm 91 would have been a welcome assurance?

5. Review the section "Believing and Confessing," pages 8–10, and give a brief background to Romans 10:8b-13. Ask someone to read the passage aloud, and then discuss the following questions:
- What did Paul believe was necessary for salvation? (See verse 9.)
- How does confessing faith in Jesus Christ destroy distinctions between Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free?
- In what ways does this passage deepen your understanding of the relationship between the words of faith and the actions of faith?
- Why does faith need "belief" and "confession"? (See verse 10.)

6. Distribute a pencil and a sheet of paper to each group member. Ask members to draw a line down the middle of the page lengthwise. At the top of the left side have them write the word *Heart*; and at the top of the right side, have them write *Mouth.* Then ask them to take a few minutes to list aspects of faith in God through Jesus Christ under the appropriate heading. For example, under "Heart," qualities of faith such as hope, joy, peace, patience, and love could be listed. Under "Mouth," aspects such as honesty, public confession, witnessing, and proclamation could be listed. After an appropriate length of time, ask a few members to share their lists if they are willing.

7. Ask someone to read Luke 4:1-13. Remind the group that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism. In fact, Jesus began the temptation "full of the Holy Spirit" (4:1) and emerged from the wilderness "filled with the power of the Spirit" (4:14). Then discuss these questions:
- When has your faith been tested after a high spiritual moment?
- How is it possible that the same Spirit who led Jesus into a place of danger also gave him the strength to resist these temptations?

8. Review the three temptations described in "A Test of Trust," pages 10–12. Point out that Jesus eventually performed all three challenges proposed by the Tempter. Then ask the following questions:
- When have you faced the temptation to satisfy your hungers, physical or emotional, at the expense of faithfulness to God?
- When have you had to resist an offer of power in order to maintain your integrity?
- When have you been tempted to test God's love?
- When have you been offered a shortcut to success that would mean a denial of your values?

9. Close the session by singing "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days" (*The United Methodist Hymnal,* 269).

1. Begin the session by telling a story about a time in your life when you were promised something that seemed unlikely to occur. If you cannot think of a personal story, read the opening paragraph of "The Destiny of a Nation," page 14. Then connect the story with the story of Abram, who was promised "countless" descendants and a land for them to inhabit but who had no children. Ask the following questions:

- When have you received a promise that seemed impossible to keep?
- How would you feel if you had received Abram's promise but had no children?
- What barriers to the fulfillment of God's covenant did Abram encounter?

2. Ask a group member to read Genesis 15:1-6. Point out the pattern in these verses: promise/doubt/divine reassurance/faith. Identify this pattern by discussing the following questions:

- What was the promise made to Abram in verse 1?
- How did Abram express his doubts in verses 2-3?
- How did God reassure Abram in verses 4-5?
- Why do you think Abram "believed the LORD" (verse 6)?

3. Ask a group member to read Genesis 15:7-12, 17-18. Review the explanation of this ritual of oath taking on page 15. Then ask the following questions:

- What rituals do we use to publicly confirm promises we make? (Hint: the wedding ceremony and the sacrament of baptism are examples.)
- At what times in your life have your initial doubts led to a deeper faith?

4. Give the background for Philippians 3:17–4:1 by reviewing the first two paragraphs of the section "The Destiny of the Faithful Christian," page 16. Then discuss the following questions:

- In what ways did Paul lead a Christlike life?
- In what ways are we called to imitate Christ in our daily life?
- How do we share in Christ's sufferings as well as the power of Christ's resurrection?

5. If possible, find the definition of the word *gnosticism/gnostics* in a Bible dictionary before the session and make a brief report to the group. Many scholars believe that the "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18) were influenced by the gnostic belief that the body is simply an evil vehicle for the good soul. Discuss the following questions:

- If you believed that the human body was evil, how would you treat your own body and those of others?
- How would viewing the human body as evil lead to the excesses

mentioned in verse 19 (self-destruction, shame, preoccupation with "earthly things")?

6. Distribute a pencil and paper to each group member. Ask them to draw a line down the middle of the paper. On the left side, have them write the heading "Earthly Things" and on the right, "Heavenly Things." Then ask them to make a list under each heading. After about five minutes, ask for volunteers to share their lists.

7. Review the two paragraphs on "standing firm," page 18. Then ask the following question:

- In what circumstances do you need to hear the words "stand firm"?

8. During the week before the session, scan the newspapers for any stories of conflicts in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Summarize the content at this point in the session. Then discuss the following questions:

- How is modern Jerusalem similar to and different from the Jerusalem of Jesus' time?
- Why do you think Jerusalem has been the location of so many important events in our Judaeo-Christian history?
- Why is Jerusalem sometimes called the "Holy City"?

9. Ask a group member to read Luke 13:31-35. Then discuss the following questions:

- What do you think were the Pharisees' motives in warning Jesus to get away from Jerusalem?
- How was Jesus' answer to their warning a statement about his mission?
- What were the reasons that Jesus lamented over Jerusalem?
- What judgment did Jesus pronounce on Jerusalem? Why?

10. Close the session by reaffirming the destiny of Christians by singing "Marching to Zion" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 733). If it is not possible to sing, close by reading Philippians 4:8-9 as a benediction.

1. Begin the session by reflecting on the invitational nature of our Christian faith. Read aloud the first paragraph of the introduction. Then discuss the following questions:

- What is the "gospel feast" to which we are invited?
- Who is invited to join in this feast?
- When have you heard the invitation to new life?

2. Ask a group member to read aloud Isaiah 55:1-5. Review the first three paragraphs of "An Invitation to Abundant Life," page 22. Then ask the group members to compare and contrast the "market" described in Isaiah 55 with the markets in which we shop.

3. Review the section on the "everlasting covenant" God pledges to the returning exiles, page 22. Then discuss the following questions:

- If you were returning to your homeland after many years, how would you react to hearing Isaiah 55:1-5?
- How does Isaiah expand and broaden the Davidic covenant (Psalm 89:28-29)?

4. Read aloud Isaiah 55:6-9. This call to repentance is a response to the blessings promised in the previous verses. Discuss the following questions:

- How is the urgency to repent expressed in verse 6?
- What is God's response to those who return to him?
- How are God's "thoughts" and "ways" different from ours?

5. Review "An Invitation to Praise," pages 23–24. Then ask a group member to read aloud Psalm 63:1-8. Discuss the following questions:

- How does Psalm 63:1-8 relate to Isaiah 55:1-9?
- When have you found yourself in a "spiritual wilderness"?
- How were you reassured of God's love in this "wilderness"?

6. Distribute a pencil or pen and paper to each group member. Explain that they are going to write a song of praise based on Psalm 63. Their song should include these features: a description of a need, how God responded, thanksgiving and praise for God's response. After an appropriate length of time, ask for volunteers to read their songs. (This exercise might also be done as a total group.)

7. Summarize or read aloud the first paragraph in the section "An Invitation to Learn," pages 24–26. Then discuss the following questions:

- Do you believe that we can learn from the past? Why, or why not?

- What examples of the inability to learn from history do you see in current world events?

8. Ask a group member to read 1 Corinthians 10:1-5. Then discuss the following questions:
- How does Paul give a Christ-centered interpretation of the Exodus?
- What parallels between the events of the Exodus and Christian baptism/Holy Communion are drawn?

9. Read 1 Corinthians 10:6-13. Then discuss the following questions:
- What sins of the Israelites in the wilderness are mentioned?
- In what ways are these sins still present in our society?
- How are the reassurances in verse 13 still relevant to our lives?

10. Ask a group member to read Luke 13:1-5. Review the portion of the section "A Call to Repentance" related to these verses (pages 26–27). Then discuss the following questions:
- How do we sometimes link tragedy with morality?
- What does Jesus do to this connection between tragedy and sin?
- How does Jesus use the two tragedies to call his hearers to repentance?

11. Read aloud the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:6-9. Then discuss the following questions:
- What does this parable say about the urgency of repentance?
- Where is a word of grace in this parable?

12. Close the session by singing the hymn "Wonderful Words of Life" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 600).

1. Begin the session by asking group members to reflect on a time when they experienced reconciliation. After a minute or two of silent reflection, ask the following questions:
- Who took the first step towards reconciliation?
- What emotions did you have at the time of reconciliation?
- How was this time of reconciling connected with your faith in God through Jesus Christ?

2. Review the section "A New Era Begins," pages 29–30, and explain the context of Joshua 5:9-12. Then ask someone to read Joshua 5:9-12. Discuss the following questions:
- How did the Israelites' entering the Promised Land "roll away" their "disgrace" as slaves in Egypt?
- In what way was their celebration of the Passover a signal that one era was ending and a new era was beginning?
- Why did the manna cease in this new era?

3. Tell the group of a "pivotal moment" in your life, or share the pivotal moments at the beginning of the section "A New Era Begins," page 29. Distribute pencils and sheets of paper to the group members. Ask them to describe a pivotal moment in their own life. Then discuss this question:
- How was this moment both a beginning and ending?

4. Lead the group in a responsive reading of Psalm 32 (*The United Methodist Hymnal,* 766). Then discuss the following questions:
- How does the psalmist describe the pain of not confessing one's sins?
- When have you experienced the guilt of not admitting your sins?
- How are the joys of forgiveness expressed?
- When have you experienced the joy of being forgiven?
- What is the "right (appropriate) time" to call on God?

5. Review the section "The Ministry of Reconciliation," pages 32–33. Retell the story of the church sign at the beginning of this section. Then discuss the following questions:
- Why do United Methodists believe that all Christians are ministers?
- What is the difference between an ordained minister and a lay minister?

6. Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Because this passage includes a great deal of theology, it may be best to discuss one verse at a time. Use the following questions:

- Why do Christians not regard (evaluate) one another or Christ according to worldly standards? (verse 16)
- In your life of faith in Christ, what "old" ways have passed away and what "new" ways have come? (verse 17)
- What is the basis of our "ministry of reconciliation"? (verses 18-19)
- What would it mean for you to be an "ambassador for Christ"? (verse 20)
- How does Christ's death enable us to become "the righteousness of God" (being in a right relationship with God)? (verse 21).

7. Review the section "The Reconciling Father," pages 33–35. Give the background of the three parables in Luke 15 (the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sons). Then discuss the following questions:
- What have you lost and then found?
- How does it feel to find what is lost?
- What is it like to be lost?
- How does it feel to be found?

8. Ask someone to read Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32. Call attention to the fact that this parable is about a father and two sons. Then discuss the following questions:
- Which of the three main characters in the parable do you most identify with and why?
- How did the actions of the younger son deeply hurt his father?
- If you were the father in the parable, would you have gone to such great lengths to welcome a child home? Why, or why not?
- Was the older son justified in his feelings toward his brother? Why, or why not?
- Do you think the older son eventually went to the feast? Why, or why not?

9. Close the session by singing "Amazing Grace" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 378) or by praying the Lord's Prayer in unison.

1. Begin the session by asking someone to read aloud Psalm 126. Or, if you have copies of *The United Methodist Hymnal,* ask the group members to read the psalm responsively (847). Mention that this psalm recalls the homecoming of the exiles who had been in Babylonia for nearly fifty years.

2. Review the section "A New Act of Redemption," pages 36–38. Ask someone to read the portion of "The Great Thanksgiving" quoted on page 37. Then ask the following questions:
- What past acts of redemption are mentioned?
- Which of these "mighty acts" are important to your faith and why?
- How is the "new" act of redemption in Jesus Christ connected to the past acts of redemption in the Old Testament?

3. Ask someone to read aloud Isaiah 43:16-21. Give the background on the Exile found on page 38. Then discuss the following questions:
- What "former thing" is mentioned in verses 16-17?
- Why will the "new thing" be greater than what God did in the Exodus?
- What is the "new thing" that God is about to do?
- What would some of your feelings be if you were returning home after fifty years in exile?

4. Tell the group members that Isaiah calls us to focus on what God is now doing and will do. Discuss the following questions:
- What are the effects of being a "prisoner of the past"?
- What "new things" is God doing in your life and the life of our church?

5. Ask someone to read aloud Philippians 3:4b-6. Review the insights into Paul's opponents found on page 39. In these verses Paul offers his "credentials" as a Jew. Then discuss the following questions:
- What is Paul's purpose in listing his "credentials" as a Jew?
- Why did Paul believe that circumcision was not necessary for Christians?

6. Ask someone to read aloud Philippians 3:7-14. Using the material in the section "Pressing on Toward God's Future," pages 39–40, lead the group members through these verses. Then discuss the following questions:
- Why does Paul regard his Jewish heritage as "loss"?
- What does Paul mean by "knowing Christ"?

- In what ways have you experienced the transformation of values that Paul describes as a result of his conversion?
- What is Paul's "righteousness" (right relationship with God) based on?
- What is Paul pressing on toward to make his own?
- How does the athletic metaphor in verses 12-14 help you understand the Christian life?

7. Retell the opening illustration of the section "Mary Anticipates What Is to Come," pages 40–41. Ask the group members if they have experienced or witnessed simple actions that express deep meanings.

8. Ask someone to read John 12:1-8. Set the scene for this passage by giving the background on page 41 about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Then discuss the following questions:
- What was Mary expressing by anointing Jesus' feet?
- Does Judas's reaction seem reasonable? Why, or why not?
- Where, in the church's ministry, do you see the humility that Mary exemplifies?

9. Form two small groups for a debate. Explain that each group will be assigned a position on the question, Was Mary's anointing of Jesus justified? Assign one group the position that Judas voiced: Mary was being wasteful, and the perfume should have been sold with the money being given to the poor. Assign the other group the position that Jesus voiced: Mary's action was appropriate because Jesus was about to go to his death. Act as moderator for the debate. Set a time limit for speeches, and vote on which position prevails.

If time does not permit a debate, you may want to discuss the merits of the two positions for a few minutes, using the material from the section "Mary Anticipates What Is to Come," pages 40–42.

10. Close the session by singing "This Is a Day of New Beginnings" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 383) or by reading the words of the hymn as a faith statement.

1. Begin the session by reminding the group members that this Sunday is Passion/Palm Sunday, a day on which Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his Passion are celebrated. On this Sunday, exaltation and humiliation come together in a unique way. Jesus, who is hailed as a king on Palm Sunday, is crucified as a criminal on Friday of the same week. Discuss the irony of triumph and tragedy being part of our worship on this day. Ask the following question:

- Why is it important to link the triumphal entry with Jesus' crucifixion? (Hint: Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday were combined because so few Christians attended worship during Holy Week, thus going from the triumph of Palm Sunday to the greater triumph of Easter. What happened during Holy Week, the Passion and death of Jesus, is essential to understanding Easter.)

2. Review the introduction on page 43 that uses the image of the eclipse. Discuss the "eclipse of the soul" in which our own needs, concerns, and desires "block out" concern for others. Ask the following question:

- What are the results of being self-absorbed and self-preoccupied?

3. Review the section "The Suffering Servant," pages 44–45, paying special attention to the first four paragraphs on the "foot washing." Read these paragraphs aloud, and then discuss the following questions:

- How would you react to having your feet washed?
- What would be your reaction to washing someone's feet?
- Why is foot washing an act of humility?
- If you had been present at the foot washing described in John 13, would you have wanted Jesus to wash your feet? Why, or why not?

4. Ask a group member to read aloud Isaiah 50:4-9a. Explain that this is the third of four Servant Songs in Isaiah 40–55 and that the early church saw the suffering of Jesus prefigured in these Servant Songs. Discuss the following questions:

- What is it that the Servant learns?
- What does humiliation "teach" the Servant?
- When have you suffered as a result of being faithful to God?
- What has such suffering taught you?

5. Review the section "A Humble Mind," pages 45–48. Give the context for Philippians 2:5-11 by summarizing what Paul says in Philippians 2:1-5 (see pages 45–46). Ask the following question:

- What "same mind" did Paul want the Christians at Philippi to share and why?

6. Have someone read aloud Philippians 2:5-11. Remind the group members that verses 6-11 contain an early Christian hymn that Paul is quoting. Then discuss the following questions:

- How is Jesus' "descent" described in verses 6-8?
- How is "self-emptying" an act of humility and love?
- In what ways do you need to "empty" yourself in order to be more open to God and other persons?
- Why does Jesus' death on the cross lead to exaltation by God?
- How does our having a "humble mind" imitate Christ's self-giving love?

7. Review the section "When Humiliation Is Exaltation," pages 48–50. Retell the opening illustration about the confirmation class presenting the Passion story. Ask the following questions:

- When have you heard the Passion story read, and how did you react?
- How did the story of Jesus' suffering and death draw you "inside" of it?

8. Have four persons read aloud Luke 23:1-49 in four sections: verses 1-12, 13-25, 26-38, and 39-49. Then discuss the following questions:

- How is Jesus' innocence proclaimed by different characters?
- What physical and psychological humiliations does Jesus face?
- Where are you in the Passion story? Which character(s) do you identify with? Why?
- How is Jesus' humiliation on the cross an act of love?
- How can the humiliations we endure for Christ's sake be acts of love?

9. Close the session with the "Canticle of Christ's Obedience" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 167) or by singing "All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 166).

1. Begin by reviewing some of the Easter hymns in *The United Methodist Hymnal*. They can be found in the "Resurrection and Exaltation" section of the hymnal (302–327). Read or sing the first verse of the following hymns: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" (302), "The Day of Resurrection" (303), "Thine Be the Glory" (308), and "Hail Thee, Festival Day" (324). Ask the following question of each of these hymns:

- How is the victory of Easter expressed?

2. Retell or read the opening illustration of the section "A Song of Victory," page 52. Then discuss the following questions:

- When have you felt like singing for joy after a victory?
- To whom did you give credit for this victory?
- How was God present in your victory?

3. Ask a group member to read aloud Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24. Remind the group of the original setting for this psalm—a king's return from a victorious battle. Discuss the following questions:

- How does the king acknowledge God's hand in his victory?
- What are the "gates of righteousness," and why is the king qualified to enter them? (verse 19)
- How did the early Christian church interpret verse 22? (See Luke 20:17.)
- In what sense is every day a "day that the LORD has made"?

4. Review the section "Witnesses to Victory," pages 53–55. Note Peter's role as a witness of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Then discuss the following questions:

- What difference did Peter's witness of the Resurrection make in his life?
- How are we indebted to Peter's witness to Jesus?

5. Ask a group member to read Acts 10:34-43. Then lead the group in a discussion, using the following questions:

- What are the attributes of God that Peter mentions in verses 34-35?
- Peter used the word *peace* to summarize Jesus' message. What word would you use to summarize Jesus' message?
- In what ways can we witness to the good news of resurrection?

6. Review the section "Victory Over the Last Enemy," pages 55–56. Discuss the idea of "enemies," using the following questions:

- Are there people you consider as enemies? Why, or why not?
- What makes a person, or a group of persons, an "enemy"?

7. Ask a group member to read 1 Corinthians 15:19-26. Using the material in the section "Victory Over the Last Enemy," pages 55–56, describe the context for this passage. (Hint: Think about Paul's defense of the doctrine of resurrection.) Then discuss the following questions:

- Why are those who disbelieve the Resurrection to be "pitied"?
- How is Christ the "first fruits" of those who have died?
- What does Paul mean by saying that "death came through a human being"?
- Why is death "the last enemy"?
- How is Christ's resurrection a victory over death?

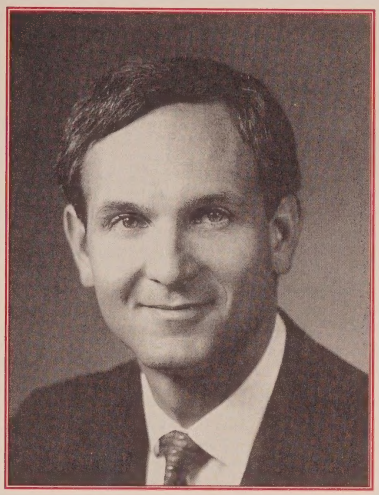
8. Before reading Luke 24:1-12, have the group members close their eyes and open their imaginations. Invite them to imagine that they are present on Easter morning, experiencing the events described. Ask a group member to read Luke's Easter story (24:1-12) slowly, pausing for a moment at the end of each sentence to allow group members to visualize the events. Then discuss the following questions:

- Which of the persons in the story (the women, the disciples, Peter) did you identify with?
- What were some of the emotions you experienced while listening to the story? Why?

9. Review the section "He Has Risen!" pages 56–58. Remind the group members that Jesus' resurrection is at the heart of the Christian faith. As Paul says, without Christ's resurrection, there is no Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:14). Then discuss the following questions:

- Why are the women at the center of Luke's Easter account?
- What is the purpose of the "two men" at the tomb?
- Why do you think the disciples did not believe the women's story?
- How does Jesus' resurrection make possible a new and resurrected life for us?

10. Close the session by inviting the group members to stand and join in The Apostle's Creed (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 881) or an "Affirmation From 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 and Colossians 1:15-20" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 888).



MEET OUR WRITER

Robert Martin Walker, a clergy member of the New York Annual Conference, lives in Darien, Connecticut. When he wrote this study, he was enjoying a one year sabbatical leave for the purpose of full-time writing. During this sabbatical he finished a novel, a book on biblical characters, and another United Methodist curriculum study for *Adult Bible Studies Teacher* (Winter Quarter, 1995).

Bob served as pastor of Darien United Methodist Church, Darien, Connecticut, for the eight years prior to his sabbatical. Before coming to Connecticut in 1984, he served churches in the Dallas area, including Richland United Methodist Church and Oak Lawn United Methodist Church. He also served as editor of the *North Texas United Methodist Reporter* while serving on the North Texas Council on Ministries staff.

Bob holds degrees from Yale Divinity School, Perkins School of Theology, and Southern Methodist University. In 1985, he was a Research Fellow at Yale Divinity School.

Bob and his wife, Donna, are the parents of Brandon and Matthew, eleven-year-old twin boys. Donna is in the investments field with Schwarzman Partners in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The author of several United Methodist curriculum resources, Bob says of his writing, "Writing curriculum is a ministry of proclamation that allows me the privilege of preaching to and teaching a vast congregation of United Methodists. I find it both challenging and fulfilling."

A Life-Changing Study of Jesus

Who Is Jesus? 13 Answers That Can Change Your Life is a flexible study resource that helps Christians clarify their understanding of Jesus and his call upon their lives. Ideal for new Christians, ***Who Is Jesus?*** teaches the basics of the Christian faith and provides a fresh look at the person, ministry, and meaning of Jesus.

The series includes 13 brief, easy-to-use lessons that may be studied in any order. This format makes the study appropriate for established Sunday school classes as well as short-term study groups or for use as an interim study in a retreat or similar setting.

Student Book.
CA5-782058. Paper, $5.00

Teacher Pack.
Contains teacher book and audiocassette.
CA5-782066. Paper, $9.95

Audiocassette.
90-minute cassette with 13 biblical stories about Jesus, each told by a well-known storyteller. Contains one story for each session.
CA5-782155. $4.95

Cokesbury
Books • Bibles • Church Resources

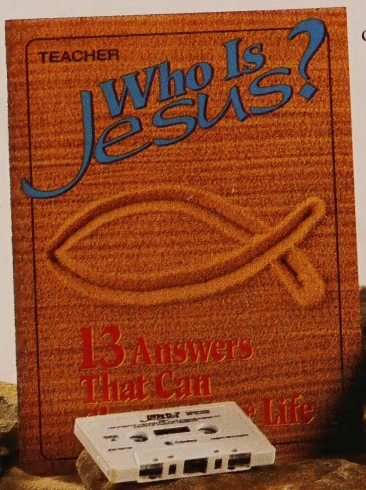
CALL OR VISIT YOUR COKESBURY STORE

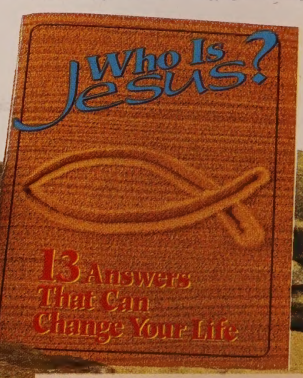
ORDER TOLL FREE: 1-800-672-1789

• • •

Satisfaction Guaranteed!

Prices subject to change without notice. Shipping and handling extra.





X779197

E1-0256-1

Walk with Jesus: Resources for Holy Week

STEVE PETTY

Walk with Jesus: Resources for Holy Week

STEVE PETTY

Abingdon Press

WALK WITH JESUS

Resources for Holy Week

Copyright © 1989 by Steve Petty

All rights reserved.
No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Avenue, South, Nashville, TN 37202.

ICN 44005X

Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1946, 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.

MANUFACTURED BY THE PARTHENON PRESS AT
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Sunday — The Eyes of Jesus 7

Monday — The Curse of Jesus 9

Tuesday — The Second Coming 11

Wednesday — The Lost Day 15

Thursday — The Last Meal 16

Maundy Thursday — Order of Worship for Seder 19

Friday — The Darkest Hours 25

Saturday — The Guarded Tomb 29

Sunday — The Real Easter 31

INTRODUCTION

Some people read a book by looking at the final chapter first. Unable to stand the suspense, they turn to the last few pages to see how the story resolves. If they like the resolution, they might, if time permits, read the whole book. I always prefer to savor the whole story and allow the author to spring the ending on me.

Millions of people attend church once a year—on Easter Sunday. They are indeed happy that Jesus has risen to assure them of life after death, but they don't have the time or inclination to spend the rest of the year learning about the details of his promises and love.

The deeper meanings of Easter are available only to those who would walk this week with Jesus. The victory is best savored when we overcome the adversity that confronts us. Victory without adversity is like dessert without dinner—sweet, yes, but not worthwhile or fulfilling.

Holy Week is a special time in the life of a Christian. Jesus made some of his most profound statements as he faced the cross. Almost one-third of the Gospels is devoted to the teachings and events of Holy Week.

Use of Scripture

A word about the listed Scriptures is in order here. In most cases there are multiple versions of the various Holy Week stories, parables, and teachings. I have not listed all these parallels; however, most of them will become obvious quickly if you place a marker in each Gospel.

Suggested Use of This Book

Each day except Wednesday contains two readings and prayers. The first reading and prayer are related directly to the Scriptures. The second reading and prayer are based on some personal experience. I suggest that they might be useful as an opening and closing to your day. If during Holy Week you could rise a little earlier than normal, you could read one or two of the day's Scriptures and the first reading and prayer. Then before retiring, you could read the second reading and prayer. Wednesday has no Scripture; hence there is no first reading.

Thursday's worship service should be a family affair. You may want to invite some fellow Christians or Jews to join you for potluck. You could eat the main meal as guests arrive and break for dessert where the service suggests eating the meal. When I served a rural parish with no synagogue, local Jews would attend our meal and bring the Haroses. The table should be set for as formal a dinner as you would have on Christmas or Easter.

SUNDAY *The Eyes of Jesus*

Mark 11:1-11 Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem
John 12:12-19 Lazarus Element Included
Psalm 118:22-29 Old Testament Reference

It is a marvelous scene! The hillside of Jerusalem is bathed in sunlight. The people are singing. The disciples are delirious with their reception. Jesus is smiling, and with open palms he is giving himself to the crowd.

But the deeper reality is even more amazing. Why are these throngs here in the first place? They are pilgrims. They have come to the Holy City for this special time. They have come because the Ark of the Covenant is within the Temple walls. They have come to celebrate their deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh. Some have come to enjoy the party atmosphere, and some to be nearer to God. What do they feel when they first see Jerusalem? Is it the same feeling college students have when they first see the beach at Ft. Lauderdale during spring break? Is it the feeling of devoutly religious persons who finally glimpse the walls of the house of God? In either case, there is a sense of joy at just being there. But the devout also feels a deep sense of awe at the nearness of the holy.

How does Jesus feel? For two years his work was seen as an amazing healing show. Crowds thronged about him to watch him heal or to be healed themselves. People would hurry around the lake to be there when his boat put in. They would follow him so far from the cities that there was no place to buy food. But when he began to preach about personal righteousness and point out the sins of the scribes and Pharisees, the crowds deserted him.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead just seven days before Palm Sunday, and a great many people came to Bethany to see if Lazarus was indeed alive (John 12:9-11).

In the next verse, when Jesus begins his short walk to Jerusalem, the crowd is buzzing with the news of Lazarus. For Jesus it must seem like the early days of adulation, adoration, high hopes. How does Jesus feel? Does he wonder if perhaps he can save Israel after all and avoid the death of the cross?

Obviously he knows the fickle nature of crowds. His mind is full of the love of God and the evil of the world. He knows the joy will become sorrow before there will be joy again. He gazes upon the crowd with love. They will enjoy the spectacle of this day, then denounce him to save themselves from the wrath of the council, and he loves them anyway.

So on this day let us pause and remember that Jesus looks at us with those same eyes. He knows that we are dressed up to enjoy the special days of Holy Week. But Jesus also knows that, like the crowds and like Peter, we will deny him with our narrowness, our shallowness, our self-centeredness, and he will have to die for us too. He looks at us, and he knows us as we really are, and he loves us anyway. That is the miracle of God.

Prayer

O blessed Lord, who rides the white donkey as the Messiah of the world, celebrate with me this day. Lift me beyond the dark shame of my guilt and

sin. Lift me up, like Lazarus, from the tombs of this world. Lift me up to see the wonder of your love, which overcomes my selfish nature. Lift me to the bright, glorious, loving home I have in you, Lord. Lift me with the joy of this day's parade, that I may celebrate and share the joy of all your people. *Amen.*

Dancing!

He is already too cute for his own good. Of course, my paternal love might be a mitigating factor in my objectivity.

David is in the midst of the wonderful and terrifying period in growthdevelopment that the experts call the Terrible Twos. Though his months number just past seventeen, he is into everything. Well, not quite everything. Actually, he is mostly into those things he is not supposed to be into. So now our house is a series of latched cupboards and drawers, and every second expression out of his parents' mouths is "No, David!"

However, the terrible/terrific twos are really wonderful to watch and try to have the eyes of a child. Yes, they get into things that indeed are dangerous. Yes, they are up to no good most of the time. Yes, it is difficult to follow them everywhere and always tell them no! but I think it is a wonderfilled time.

David is discovering the wonder of finding a flower where none was yesterday. It is all the more wonderful because when he squats down to look, it is right there at eye level for him to inspect. Puddles are wonderful to splash in—not just because they are wet, but because he can make them do such wonderful things—noises, wet shapes on the pavement, footprints that follow him everywhere.

But the thing that gives me the biggest thrill is David's dancing. He has learned how to punch the power button on the stereo and make the music come out. Then he bends his knees and waves his hands. He smiles and spins, dances and whirls, and the music seems to come right out of his feet.

I don't think he knows how to *not* dance. The music starts and his knees bend. He can suck on a bottle and dance. He can carry a book and dance. The only thing he can't do is *not* dance. He cannot avoid being swept up in the rhythm. How exquisitely wonderful to not be able to avoid the spirit of the dance! He is captured, forever I think, by the beauty of the music.

How is it that we adults learn to avoid the wonder? There is music all around us, and all we do is listen. We rarely get "involved."

Jesus enters Jerusalem in a great parade, and we only stand and watch. It is to our eternal shame that we avoid the spirit of the event. God does such a wonderful thing this day! The spirit of Christ's great love must enter us and move us to take part in his dance up to Jerusalem. On this day of Jesus' greatest triumph before his death we must be swept up in the dance!

Prayer

Forgive me, Lord, for I have watched the dance from the sidelines and not gotten involved. Take my hand and lift me out of my insecurities about how I might look to others while I dance. Let my heart and my life be moved by the power of your love. But most of all on this day, move my feet, Lord. *Amen.*

MONDAY *The Curse of Jesus*

Mark 11:12-19 Barren Fig Tree and Cleansing of the Temple

Jesus returns on Monday to reap the fruits of Palm Sunday. He has been proclaimed the Messiah by the crowds, and they should be waiting for him. But his efforts to open their hearts to God have not borne fruit.

First, Jesus encounters the poor barren fig tree. Being hungry, he looks for fruit and finds none. So he curses the tree, "May no one ever eat from you again."

Second, Jesus encounters the spiritual emptiness of the Temple. Graft, corruption, greed, and theft are sanctioned by the Temple priests. Jesus drives the money changers away, upsets the tables and chairs, and stops people from carrying trade goods into the Temple.

We have trouble with these verses. This is not "gentle Jesus, meek and mild." This is an angry Jesus, indignant and wild. We, of course, want to see Jesus as loving and gentle because we want to be recipients of that love and gentleness. Doesn't the Bible tell us that God is eager to forgive our sins? Why didn't Jesus forgive the fig tree? Why is he so violent with the money changers? What does that say about the way God will deal with me?

The fig tree usually produces its fruit in the fall. But there is an early fig that may come with the first blush of spring. Usually these fruits fall off or are blown off and never ripen, but when they do ripen they are highly prized for their excellent flavor. It is spring, so Jesus was expecting to find something special, but this poor tree had no fruit.

Surely Jesus had been to the Temple before. He had seen the money changers and their greed before. But he expected them to be doing something special in this holy season.

There are times when God expects more of us than we are normally prepared to give. Those are the times when we can produce our best fruit, the times when our effort is magnified by God's power, and we can accomplish more than we could reasonably expect. If God cannot count on us to deliver fruit at such times, then we too are subject to his condemnation.

Jesus expects us to bear delicious fruit. He has come so that we might have life more abundantly. If we are satisfied with life more meagerly, then we have robbed God of his gift to us. And as the fig tree and the money changers can well attest, we will know the curse of Jesus.

Prayer

Dearest Lord, have mercy on me, for my life deserves your curse, and I beg for your blessings. I have always had the best intentions but the worst achievements. I have had a million opportunities but tried only a few times. I have heard so many weeping hearts and pain-filled lives but offered myself so little. Nurture me, Lord, that I may bear great fruit for you. Give me the courage to try again and again to bear my witness to your love. May Jesus find my branches filled with fruit to show his glory. In Jesus' name, I pray. *Amen.*

It taught my future mother-in-law a lesson. It cost me about six hundred dollars and set me back more than just money. It was a vile, wicked, unkind thing to do, and I will never forget it.

In the wild days of my youth, the main joys of my life were my car—a bright red Sunbeam Alpine roadster—and my great love, the girl of my dreams, the lovely Linda Hadley (now my wife). We had a stormy romance. Actually, both the car and the girl were major disappointments and caused me considerable consternation over a long period of time. In truth, I should say that I had a stormy romance with both.

The Alpine was a cute little car—fire engine red, black leather seats, black convertible top, four-cylinder engine, dual carburetors—and for all that, it was just fast enough not to be embarrassing around a VW.

The used roadster was my graduation present from my parents upon my un-noteworthy matriculation from high school, though I paid for half of it myself. I spent most of my earnings over the next five years just keeping it on the road.

My relationship with Linda was stormier. Often we would spend an entire evening arguing about any number of life-and-death issues. This would lead to a quick good night at the door and a hot-blooded youth's tire-squealing exit from the curb.

After one such high-decibel retreat, my beloved's mother, against her best Christian teaching, swore a curse on my little red car. Unknown to me, my car was doomed.

The next day, a Sunday, as I again demonstrated my frustration by acting out the start of the Indianapolis 500 in front of my church, my car zoomed about twenty feet and came to a dead stop. It would go no farther. What was supposed to be a display of manhood and horsepower became a dark moment of extreme embarrassment. No amount of urging would move my car. Later, when the transmission was dismantled, we found the main shaft broken in two. The car was actually quite innocent, but the driver was guilty of being a foolish youth.

Linda's mother expected better of me, and I had no intention of being better. My car deserved better from me, but I mistreated it. In time, I did learn to treat people better. (After all, Linda did consent to marry me.) And after the expense of rebuilding the transmission, I treated the car better.

How often do we disappoint the people around us? How often are we so wrapped up in our foolish desires that we cannot see the error of our actions? How often are we an embarrassment to ourselves and to our God? How often do even loving people curse the foolishness of our actions?

Prayer

O most understanding Lord, how often have I failed your call? How often have I been more concerned about myself and forgotten the other people around me who need your love? How often have I been unwilling to shoulder the responsibilities you have placed on me? Lift me, dearest Jesus, from the misery of my weak will. Call me to move in better paths. Call me to move in ways that please you and serve your kingdom. *Amen.*

TUESDAY *The Second Coming*

Mark 11:20-33	Fig Tree Withered; Authority of Jesus Questioned
Matthew 21:28–23:39	Parable of the Two Sons Parable of the Wicked Tenants Parable of the Marriage Feast Tribute to Caesar The Sadducees and Resurrection The Greatest Commandment Who Is the Christ? Woe to Scribes and Pharisees
Mark 12:41-44	A Widow's Mite Greeks Seek Him Jews Reject Him
Matthew 24:1–26:14	Jesus Teaches What Shall Be Parable of the Ten Maidens Parable of the Talents The Judgment to Come Judas Conspires Against Him

The world has spent too many hours trying to decide when Jesus will come again. It is curious that with the recent spate of earthquakes, we see a resurgence of books on this subject. It is a subject Jesus himself discussed on Tuesday of Holy Week (see Matt. 24:8).

These teachings are some of the hardest in the Gospels. They are about judgment, and they all seem to condemn us for what we are not doing. We surely see ourselves too often in the words of Tuesday. What are the signs of Jesus' coming again? We do not know and we cannot know (Matt. 24:36, 38, 44, 50; 25:13). Jesus does not know (Matt. 24:36). And further, Jesus says that anyone who professes to know is wrong (Matt. 24:5-6, 23-27, 36). However, when it happens, we will know it is happening (Matt. 24:27-28).

Jesus makes the best points about his coming again when he reiterates that the secret is to be prepared. Does it make any difference whether his coming is premillennial or postmillennial? Will Jesus reign for a thousand years before he destroys the earth, or will he destroy the earth and bring in a new kingdom that lasts for a thousand years? Does it make any difference how we prepare? No, it can't. If we do the best we possibly can, then time makes no difference. If we make excuses about our goodness, then time will not save us.

Jesus rails against the evils of the world on Tuesday. Do we see these same evils in our world today? Do we hear of wars and rumors of wars? Are there earthquakes and famines? Are there people who claim to know where Jesus is? Are there people who even claim to be the new Messiah? Of course! There have been ever since Jesus ascended into heaven.

Because we cannot know, we are called upon to live every moment as if it were the most important moment of our life. The earth could be destroyed in the next moment. Jesus could come again in the next moment. Perhaps

our lives will be judged by what we do in this very moment, and thereafter time will stop. Perhaps Jesus will call us in this moment and ask, "What have you done for me?" Perhaps this moment is the last moment, and there will be no "rest of our lives." Again, we cannot know.

We must be prepared. We must give our lives to Christ and work actively to build his kingdom. We must be prepared. Always prepared!

Prayer

O Lord of all life, use my every day for your loving work. Use my every word for your loving work. Use my every movement for your loving work. Use me always for your loving work.

I am yours, Lord, use me. I cannot wait for signs and wonders, Lord, use me. I cannot wait until you come again, Lord, use me. I cannot wait for everyone to see your righteousness, Lord, use me.

Let me feel your Spirit, hear your voice, see your hands, and I will do your loving work, O Lord. *Amen.*

The "O'fer" Summer

When I was a small boy, my summers were consumed with baseball. It is still a joy to watch a well-played game of rounders. My game career was full of high and low points, but one particular summer and one particular time at bat made a great difference in my life.

As a youngster in Little League I was fortunate to play four consecutive years for a championship team. I played every position on the team at one time or another, though I was most often used at second, first, catcher, and outfield. I was pretty good, within the League. I maintained a high average at the plate, made few errors, and had great lateral movement.

Then age caught up with me and I had to advance to Pony League. As the youngest kid on the team, I was relegated to reserve right field and sat on the bench through many games. It proved to be a very long summer. Though I rarely struck out, walked often, and scored several runs, July and the end of the season found me batting a less than awesome .000. But I never imagined I would go through the whole year without a hit.

During the last week, I tattooed the ball every time up. And every ball was a screaming line drive caught by an infielder who never moved from his spot.

I was not in the starting lineup for our last game. I sat and watched our team race to a big deficit and coast home for an apparent loss. The last inning, the opposing coach put in a young pitcher for a quick try at three easy outs. He threw a fast ball to our first batter, who watched it drop over for a strike and then took two roundhouse curves before he came back to sit down. The next batter took another fast ball over the middle of the plate on the first pitch, and then grounded out to second.

As the final batter stepped up to the plate, our coach had a sudden attack of hysterical mercy. He called time out, walked out to the plate, talked to the umpire for a minute, and sent our batter back.

"Petty, you're up," he barked. The whole team was silent as I stepped out to pick up the batting helmet, selected a bat, and strode to the batter's box. Everybody knew what the pitcher would throw on the first pitch. Everybody knew what my batting average was. Everybody knew—even me. I was prepared for this moment.

I was anxious to get up there and prove I could do the job. I had spent every hour of my childhood learning to hit a baseball. I knew timing. I knew arm motions. I watched ball rotations. I watched outfield positions. I was prepared. I knew I could hit this guy. There was no question in my mind that when I hit the ball it was going over the fence.

The pitcher gave it every ounce of muscle he had. The pitch came right down the middle of the plate, hard, fast, and straight. I stepped forward and swung with all I could muster, and the ball took off for deep center.

I remember watching the ball in flight. I remember thinking how ironic it was to go all summer without a hit, and then hit a home run on my last at bat. I could see my father's proud face at my sudden redemption. I could see into the next year, and I knew I could start in the outfield. As I rounded first and chugged into second, I watched the center fielder make a valiant leap at the fence, fall back against the scoreboard, and make the catch of his life.

I never put on a uniform again. When the end comes, you know it.

Prayer

Keep me ready, O Lord. Keep my eye sharp to your vision. Keep my ears awake to your call. Keep my body ready to move at your invitation. Keep my hands ready to reach out for your people. Keep me ready, O Lord, always ready! *Amen.*

WEDNESDAY *The Lost Day*

There is no record of any activity on Wednesday.

Have you ever, kind of, . . . just lost a day? You go about your business, and suddenly the day is over and you wonder where it went. Perhaps you can't even remember one useful thing you accomplished all day.

I have lost whole weeks that way. I have lost whole months to seasonal tasks. I once lost about fifty miles on the freeway. When I woke up, I was still in the left lane, just fifty miles from where I knew I had been when last I could remember.

The Gospels probably lost hundreds of days. We believe the ministry of Jesus lasted about three years, and his activities certainly are not listed on all 1,095 days. But it is interesting that this Wednesday has no recorded activity.

What did Jesus do? Obviously his disciples did not know, or one of them would have recorded it. Did he go to Jerusalem to make the arrangements for the upper room and the Passover meal? Did he go to Gethsemane to pray? We really don't know. The Bible is silent.

Sometimes the best way to prepare is to do nothing, or something totally unrelated. Often in the past when I was stymied by a scriptural passage or a sermon that wasn't coming along well, I just went away and left it alone. The tasks with which I cleared my mind were varied. Sometimes I worked in the garden for a couple of hours. Sometimes I played basketball by myself until I was exhausted. To lose yourself in time for a while can be a tremendously cleansing activity.

I think Jesus lost himself in Wednesday. I think it was perhaps the most important day in the week for him. Looking back on his ministry, he could see the mountains and the valleys. He saw the faces of Mary and Martha before he raised Lazarus and after he brought their brother out of the tomb alive. He saw the faces of the possessed, the lepers, the infirm, the crowds, the individuals. He saw the Jews he touched with his teachings, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the Canaanite woman at his door, the Roman centurion, the young man on his funeral cot. The people he touched were not mere masses. They were his people. They are us. Looking forward, he could see his disciples fleeing for their lives, Peter's denial, Judas' betrayal, Caiaphas in ashes, Mary in tears. He saw the Passover Seder as a new meal—freedom from slavery, but also freedom from fear and sin and death. He saw it all. Could he possibly understand how much it was to mean? Could any mind comprehend it all?

Sometimes it is better not to think. Sometimes it is better to simply do what love requires and let that be enough. Jesus' life is lost in the Gospels on Wednesday. In his lostness, we are found.

Prayer

O my Lord, you carry the weight of the world on your shoulders, and I want to add my burdens to your load. Forgive me for wanting everything from you. Forgive me, but still take my sins, please. Let me lose myself in you, Lord. Let me lose myself in your love and compassion. Let me lose myself and find you, Lord, and then I can find the real me. *Amen.*

THURSDAY *The Last Meal*

Mark 14:12-16	Preparation for the Passover
John 13:1-20	Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet
Mark 14:17-21	The Betrayer
Luke 22:15-20	The Lord's Supper
Mark 14:22-25	Greatness in the
Luke 22:24-34	Kingdom of God

The verses that speak of this meal are in every Gospel. There is no question that Jesus took the special occasion of Passover to speak to his disciples about a variety of issues.

The texts of Matthew and Mark are almost verbatim in their agreement. Luke seems to have a different source of information; his recounting is similar, but includes several sections not found in the other Gospels. Luke's text shows a deeper understanding of the words spoken in the service.

This is a glorious meal to most Christians. Da Vinci's *Last Supper* is the definitive work of art. Yet truth is often distorted by art and simplification. The Scriptures do not say where the disciples sat, how they ate, or what food was present in addition to the wine and bread. We must assume much.

It would have been traditional for the guests to sit on pillows. It would have been traditional for the host to provide a servant to wash the feet of the weary guests. It is not traditional for the host to accomplish that task. Usually the meal begins with a blessing by the mother of the house as she lights the candles, but no woman is mentioned in the texts. The meal would be eaten in haste as prescribed by the book of Exodus. The wine would be consumed with each new toast. The Psalms would be sung (Mark 14:26 and Matt. 26:30 mention hymns), and the traditional foods would be eaten at the prescribed times. The whole ceremony could last for hours with the reading of the entire book of Exodus.

How difficult this must have been for Jesus. He knew that Judas would betray him and that Peter would deny him. He knew that he must suffer and die and that the disciples would understand nothing of the whole process. He knew, and he told them, but they would not listen.

He explained what was happening in the historical perspective of the Passover—the meal at which we acknowledge God's hand in our deliverance from all the trials of this life. We see God's hand in the conversations with Pharaoh, in the deliverance of the children from Egypt, in the parting of the water and the escape from the armies of Pharaoh. We see God's hand as a tower of fire, guiding the children across the wilderness. We see God's hand in the past, but we are foolish when it comes to the present.

Jesus tried to explain the new deliverance he was providing and set off a quarrel about who would be the greatest among the disciples. They seemed to understand so little, and there was no time left to teach them. In John's Gospel, Jesus was much more demanding. John assumed that Jesus saved some of his best teachings for that last-minute opportunity.

Jesus spoke, in John, at some length about his failure to convert the world and the way the world had chosen to hate him, as it hated the prophets before him. He reminded the disciples that to take up his cross meant that

the world would hate them as well. They must have wondered at this. How could this man, who had spent the last three years talking about loving one another, declare that to continue his ministry, they must prepare to be hated? It was a true but curious teaching that they did not appreciate or understand. Further, Jesus was so sure of his disciples that he predicted their failure to be faithful.

The message is just as difficult to understand today—that we are called to be servants, not lords; prophets, not kings; givers, not takers; and lovers, rather than the objects of love. When we follow those instructions, the world still will not understand and will seek to silence us. Then we too will be hated, not loved; ridiculed, not idolized; crucified, rather than exalted. We have been forewarned. Fortunately, we are also forgiven more often than we are condemned.

As Jesus understood so well, it is better to be condemned by the world and blessed by God than the other way around.

Prayer

O blessed Jesus, forgive me when I do not understand your teachings. Forgive me when my life reflects the sinfulness of the world, rather than the selflessness of your love. Pass over my sins, O Lord, and by giving me your Holy Self, raise me as a new being in your image, to glorify your ministry. Keep me strong when the world would hate me. Keep me courageous when the world would tempt me. Keep me yours when I am prone to adopt the ways of the world. Send me your Spirit to guide me in your path. I pray in your name. *Amen.*

The Approaching Defeat

Everyone likes to win. There is nothing earth-shattering about that. Winners are expected to accomplish their tasks graciously and with humility. But what of the losers? They are called to be graciously complimentary.

A fine line, drawn on beach sand, delineates winners from losers. Some people lose so charmingly that you realize they can never be defeated. Then there are people who win so poorly that you wonder if it isn't possible to snatch their prize away because they are so undeserving.

In 1980 I was coaching a junior varsity football team. We did not win a single game all year. We made some great plays, worthy of anyone's highlight films, yet we were winless.

I suppose much of it was my fault. I had instituted a very complex offense which required a great deal of attention to detail and quick thinking on the part of the whole team. To their credit, they had learned the whole system. However, it broke down once or twice during every game, and those mistakes cost us wins.

But the team never gave up. We had the smallest school in the League and the smallest linemen. I used to joke that our guards couldn't ride the Midget Autopia at Disneyland because they were too short, and it was almost true. Once we played a team that had more boys on the squad than we had in our

whole school. We were completely blown out of several games, though we always tried to score some points before the final tick of the clock. Battered and tired, bloodied and bruised, outmanned and outscored, we never quit.

But there comes a time in every game when you realize there is not enough time to win. You are going to lose! Each game is begun with the hope—no, the expectation—of victory. Each play is executed with all the strength and skill of which the team is capable. Yet, at the beginning of the fourth quarter, when the scoreboard reads, Home Team 55–Visitors 0, you know you are going to lose.

The question then becomes, How will you lose? Will you crawl under the yard lines and slither off the field? Will you become bitter? Will you look for scapegoats and excuses? Or will you accept the loss and remain victorious in attitude? Will you learn from your defeats? Will you send the message to your team that despite the record, they are invincible?

It was hard to keep a smile on my face that year. The parents were unkind; a small town can be cruel to a losing coach. But I remember every post game locker room meeting as a time to think of the next game, to talk about the good things we had accomplished—the eighty-yard quarterback sneak to avoid a shutout—and send out a team that would learn the real value of winning. I told the team they were capable of more mistakes and bigger losses, but I also told them that only losers are defeated. I told them I was proud of them.

In the face of approaching defeat, real winners talk about real winning. That is what Jesus was doing this night: in the face of approaching defeat, he talked about winning!

In 1981 we went undefeated!

Prayer

O God, forgive me for those times when I have let life knock me down and I have been slow to get up. Forgive me for thinking more of what I cannot do for you, rather than recognizing what I can do and giving myself to that task. Let me hear your voice again, Lord. Call me to live with all the expectations of victory, knowing you have defeated even death. Make me a winner, Lord. Even when life deals me losses, make me your winner. *Amen.*

MAUNDY THURSDAY *Order of Worship for Seder*

A Modified Form of the Haggadah for a Christian Celebration of the Ancient Pesach, or Passover Festival

(Unless otherwise noted, the liturgy is led by the head of the household.)

EXPLANATION OF TERMS AND SYMBOLS

(All the following items should be present on the head table. Items noted with an asterisk should be present at every table.)

***MATZAH:** Unleavened bread. Unleavened dough sunbaked on the desert rocks, which the Hebrews made and ate during their hasty departure from Egypt.

PESACH: Roasted lamb shankbone, representing the sacrificial Passover lamb (Exod. 12:21-27).

***MAROR:** Bitter herb, usually a piece of horseradish. A reminder of the bitterness of life in bondage—not only in Egypt, but everywhere.

***KARPAS:** Garden greens, usually watercress or parsley. At ancient banquets, the appetizer. The greens are dipped in a small bowl of salt water, recalling the hyssop dipped for sprinkling on the doorposts of Hebrew dwellings in preparation for the Exodus (Exod. 12:22).

***HAROSET:** A mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine which serves to sweeten the bitter herbs (see page 24 for recipe). Because of its appearance, it symbolizes the mud mixed with straw used by the slaves to build Egypt's great monuments.

ROASTED EGG: Represents the burnt offerings brought to the Temple during festivals in ancient days.

WINE: The traditional symbol of rejoicing. "Wine to gladden the heart of man" (Ps. 104:15).

AFIKOMAN: In ancient times the last morsel of the paschal lamb, eaten at the end of the Passover meal. In modern times, it is represented by half of the middle matzah in the cremonial Seder dish, which, when broken off, is hidden until the end of the meal.

ELIJAH'S CUP: *For the Jew:* An extra cup of wine, displayed to welcome the beloved prophet of hope who would announce the Messiah's coming.
For the Christian: This cup now represents the Cup of Blessing, the Passover, "shed for you . . . for the forgiveness of sins."

CANDELABRA: The symbol of God's presence at the ceremony. Usually a three-tiered candelabra is used.

WATER AND TOWEL: Used for the leader's ceremonial hand-washing.

Candlelighting and Blessing

(Usually this is carried out by the mother of the household.)

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, Thou hast blessed us with Thy commandments and directed us to kindle holy-day light.
(*The candles are lighted.*)

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, Thou hast given us life, kept us safely, and brought us to this holy season.

THE SEDER

I. THE KIDDUSH—The blessing of the festival

(The first cup of wine is raised.)

With praise and with the symbols of our past, we renew the memories of our past and the promise of our future.

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who has chosen us from all peoples and exalted and blessed us with Thy commandments. In love hast Thou given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy and festive seasons of gladness, even this day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a memorial of the departure from Egypt and, in the fullness of time, the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Thou hast chosen us Thy servents and hast made us sharers in the blessing of Thy holy festivals. Praised art Thou, O Lord, who dost bless Thy people.

In unison: **Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.**

(Drink the first cup.)

II. WASH THE HANDS

"I wash my hands in innocence, and go about thy altar, O Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all thy wondrous deeds" (Ps. 26:6-7).
(Wash hands and forearms with great flourish; dry with towel.)

III. BLESSING OF THE SPRING GREENS

(All present take a piece of parsley and dip it in salt water.)
In unison: **Praised art thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, creator of the produce of the earth** (Ps. 104:14).

(Eat the greens.)

IV. BREAKING THE MATZAH (Bread)

(The leader breaks the middle of the three matzos in the Passover plate. One half is left in the plate; the other is the Afikoman, to be hidden and eaten at the end of the meal.)

V. THE STORY OF PASSOVER

(Matzos on the plate are uncovered and held so all may see.)

See the bread of suffering that our ancestors ate in Egypt. All you who are hungry, come and eat with us. Let all who are in want come and celebrate Passover with us. This year men are enslaved; may next year see them free.

(Leader replaces matzos.)

VI. THE FOUR QUESTIONS

(To be asked by the youngest person present.)

1. Why do we eat only matzah on this night when on other nights we may eat either bread or matzah?
2. Why do we taste bitter herbs on this night?
3. Why on this night do we dip salad greens in salt water and bitter herbs in haroset? We don't do this on other nights.
4. On other nights we may eat without special ceremonies. Why do we hold this Seder service on this night?

The Answer!

We celebrate this night because we were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt. But the Lord our God rescued us with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. If the Holy One had not redeemed our ancestors, then we and our children and our children's children might still be enslaved in Egypt. Therefore, even if all of us were wise and well versed in the Bible, it would still be our duty to tell the story of deliverance from bondage. The first great act of deliverance was from physical bondage in Egypt. The final great act of deliverance was from sin and death by Jesus on the cross.

The Story of Oppression and Deliverance

(Read the Passover Scripture [Exod. 13].
Read from the "Song of Moses" [Exod. 15:2].)

In unison: **The Lord is my strength and my song. And He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him my Father's God and I will exalt Him.**

DA-YE-NU (pronounced DAH-YAY-NEW), means we should have been satisfied.

(Read responsively)

Had He brought us out of Egypt, and not divided the sea for us,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He divided the sea, and not permitted us to cross on dry land,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He permitted us to cross the sea on dry land, and not sustained us for forty years in the desert, and not fed us with manna,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He fed us with manna, and not ordained the Sabbath,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He ordained the Sabbath, and not led us to the land of Isaiah,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He brought us to Mount Sinai, and not given us the Torah,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He given us the Torah, and not led us to the land of Israel,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He led us to the land of Israel, and not build the Temple,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He build the Temple, and not sent us the prophets,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He sent us the prophets, and not made us a holy people,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He made us a holy people, and not sent us the Messiah Jesus Christ,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He sent us Jesus, and not given Him to die for our sins,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He given Jesus to die for our sins, and not raised Him to life,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He raised Him to life, and not caused Him to send us His Spirit,

DA-YE-NU!

Had He sent us His Holy Spirit, and not blessed us with His presence,

DA-YE-NU!—We should have been satisfied!

VII. BREAKING AND BLESSING THE UNLEAVENED BREAD

(The leader takes the top matzah and the remainder of the middle matzah from the ceremonial plate, while other participants each take a small portion from the plate near them, breaking the matzah while the leader recites the following blessing.)

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who bringest forth food from the earth *(repeat)*.

VIII. BLESSING THE BITTER HERB

(Each person takes a bit of bitter herb—horseradish—with the haroset and places it between two pieces of matzah. See recipe on page 24.)

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, Thou hast blessed us with Thy commandments and ordained that we should eat bitter herbs.

(Eat the bitter herb.)

IX. SERVE THE MEAL

(Here the evening meal would be served and eaten.)

X. SHARE THE AFIKOMAN

(When the meal is over, the Afikoman is taken from its hiding place, broken, and distributed. After this has been eaten, no more food is served.)

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

XI. THANKSGIVING FOR THE SEDER MEAL

(Read Ps. 128.)

Leader: Friends, let us give thanks to the Lord.

In unison: **Praise be the name of God both now and evermore.**

Leader: Let us praise him of whose food we have eaten and by whose goodness we live.

In unison: **Praise be the Lord, our God and blessed be his name.**

XII. THE FINAL BENEDICTION

(Cups are filled for the last time. Jesus would have raised Elijah's cup for his final offering and shared it around the table. Leader lifts Elijah's cup and reads.)

Likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).

The festive service is completed. With songs of praise, we have lifted our cups symbolizing the divine promise of salvation, and have called upon the name of God.

As we offer the benediction over this last cup, let us again lift our souls to God in faith and hope. May our God who broke Pharaoh's yoke forever shatter all fetters of oppression and hasten the day when swords, at last are broken and war ended. Soon may God cause the glad tidings of redemption to be heard in all lands so that humankind, freed from violence and from wrong, and united in an eternal covenant of love may celebrate the universal Passover in the name of our Almighty God, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit.

In unison: **Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.**

(Drink the last cup.)

The Praise of God
(Read Ps. 117.)

THE BENEDICTION
(Read Luke 2:39.)

Haroset

(Best when made two days before.)

3 grated (or chopped) peeled apples, the tarter the better
¼ lb. chopped walnuts
½ cup grape juice or sweet Concord grape wine
Cinnamon to taste

Mix all together—makes about one quart. (Leftovers are great in waffle batter.)

FRIDAY *The Darkest Hours*

Mark 14:32-52	Jesus in Gethsemane Jesus Betrayed and Arrested

Trial by the Jews

John 18:13, 19-24	Jesus Before Annas
Mark 14:53-65	Jesus Before Caiaphas
Luke 22:66-71	Jesus Before the Sanhedrin
Luke 22:55-62	Peter Denies Jesus

Trial by Legal Authorities

John 18:28-38	Jesus Before Pilate
Luke 23:6-12	Jesus Before Herod
Matthew 27:15-26	Jesus Before Pilate Again
Matthew 27:27-31	Soldiers Mock Jesus
Luke 23:26-32	Road to Golgotha
Matthew 27:33-44	Crucifixion

Seven Last Words

1. Luke 23:33-34	"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
2. Luke 23:39-43	"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."
3. John 19:25-27	"Woman, behold, your son! . . . Behold, your mother!"
4. Mark 15:33-39	"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
5. John 19:28, 29	"I thirst."
6. John 19:30	"It is finished."
7. Luke 23:44-49	"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"

The Burial

Mark 15:42-47

These sections of Scripture record some cruel events. Jesus was shuffled off to different people, councils, and holding areas, like a lamb being led to the slaughter house. The only question was, Who would conduct the slaughter?

The Jews were without authority to condemn a person to death, though crowds might stone some poor soul with the full consent of the Temple authorities. Annas and Caiaphas were eager to see Jesus dead, but unwilling to take the credit for his sentence. Even when the Sanhedrin had enough evidence to condemn him and could incite the crowds to do so, it passed the lamb to Pilate. Pilate in turn passed him to Herod, who decided not to keep him and returned him to Pilate. Pilate tried to release Jesus, but found himself stuck with him. This so upset Pilate that he said, "I wash my hands of

this man's blood." No one wanted to kill Jesus, but it seems everyone wanted him dead, and when it was no longer avoidable, he was killed. The whole episode is pathetic.

One of the most pathetic things about the crucifixion is that everyone wanted to pass the buck. We expect evil to stand up and take credit for its victory. But no! Evil slinks away and points at everyone else: "They did it. Those righteous people over there—scribes, Pharisees, high priest, Roman guards, Roman procurator, Jewish governor, crowds of righteous pilgrims—they did it in the name of God and Caesar and righteousness." The good people of Judea allowed it, encouraged it. They did it too. And so do we!

Jesus—dragged through the night, offered no food, stripped naked, crowned with thorns, toyed with by soldiers, pierced in the side, bloodied and beaten—dies. He dies with words we never before have heard. He forgives them all—Pharisees, scribes, High Council, Romans, Jews, soldiers, disciples, followers—all of them. He welcomes a criminal into paradise with him. He cares for his mother. He calls to God in his anguish, almost in anger—"Why am I forgotten now?" Then he allows himself to feel human, even asking for something to drink. Finally, he knows the end is near, life is finished, and he commits himself to God.

Then, out of love, shame, guilt, remorse, affection, whatever, his body is left in a tomb by the women who must leave it during the sabbath and return to it on the first day of the week.

Indeed, for humanity, there is little hope in these events. We have methodically killed our best hope for reconciliation with God. We have given ourselves over to the way of darkness.

So in the end, there is no light in this day at all.

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, why is it that I can love you so much and still let this happen to you? In my heart I know that Easter is near, and you will rise and forgive me. In my mind I hear your words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," but I still feel horrible. I know that every time I look the other way to avoid seeing the sins of my own life, I am driving another nail in your palms. I know you expect better of me. Lord, do not leave me in this darkness; I need your light every day. Forgive me, Lord. Brighten and enlighten me, Lord. *Amen.*

The Non-Joiner

She sat there. The light was green, and she just sat there. She hadn't even moved two feet forward. She just sat there, her left-turn signal flashing, and her engine running. The light turned orange, then red, and she still sat there.

I had foolishly pulled too close behind her to swing out into the right-hand lane and pull around, so I sat there too. At first I was more than a little

annoyed at her ignorance. When the light first changed to green, there had been no car coming for at least a half a block. When that car cleared the intersection, the next was almost a block away. Her big Cadillac was still waiting for orders when a dozen or more cars filled the opposing lanes and the light changed back to red.

Any average driver could easily have made the left-hand turn twice. But she was not confident that she could make it. She sat there. During the second red light, I could back up enough to get into the right lane when it was clear. When I did extricate myself from her rear bumper, I turned to see her face as I passed. Then I was not so much annoyed as concerned. She seemed nearly paralyzed with fear behind that wheel. Her fear kept her quite within her own comfort zone of traffic safety. She was a victim of some foreboding thought that held her in an icy grip.

Later in the day I passed the same intersection and was pleased to see she had managed to move on. How many harried motorists had cursed her lack of progress? How many green lights had beckoned her before she moved? How many opportunities had passed before she felt free to seize one? How safe did it have to seem before she could move her right foot a few inches to the right and allow that big powerful motor to do the job the General had designed it to do? When she arrived home, how long did she tremble before she could open the car door and climb out? I will never know.

What are the fears that keep us within our prescribed safety zones? Personal and family welfare? Monetary independence? Physical harm? The unknown? What courage do we lack to venture forth and be the brave people Christ calls us to be?

What fears kept the crowds, the disciples, Nicodemus, Mary and Martha, the healed and whole, recipients of Jesus' ministry, silent as the forces of darkness cried, "Crucify him!" and insisted that Pilate free Barabbas? What kept them from moving forward as the living God was handed over for crucifixion? What fear keeps us in our comfortable places every day, as Jesus dies for us again? And when we weep with the women at the cross, do we weep for our Savior's suffering, or do we weep for our own shameful cowardice?

Prayer

Give me a new sense of courage, Lord. A parade is passing, and you are leading, but I just can't seem to really join in. Move within me. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Let me cast aside my fears. Let me love you with an emotion that drives me to actions of love. Let me love you as I have always wanted to love you, casting aside my fears. Fill me with a great abiding feeling of love for you and your world, Lord, so that my need to love others will overcome my fear of losing myself. *Amen.*

SATURDAY *The Guarded Tomb*

Matthew 27:62-66

The Jewish authorities feared the worst—a possibility they could not voice aloud. What if he *is* the Messiah? What if he *can* rise in three days? What if (Hush!) we were wrong?

This is what they say aloud, "His followers may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has risen." But do they themselves want to guard that tomb? No, not they. They put seals on the stones and get Pilate to send a military guard to watch over a religious crime.

But do we not do the same today? How do we guard our hearts to keep God out? How do we seal our church to keep the body inside? How do we keep Jesus in his proper place, so our lives may continue in their comfortable paths?

If we seal the tomb, who is on the inside and who is on the outside? If the Lord of life is on the inside, where are we? If there is a wall between us and the Lord of life, *what* are we? If Jesus came out of that tomb in Jerusalem in A.D. 33, what will he do this year? Are our walls stronger now than they were then? Are our lives better fortified?

Who do we send to guard our tombs?
Who do we send?
Who do we guard?
Who do we bury?

Prayer

O Most Precious Lord, forgive me for my fearful life, my sealing of my heart to your presence. Forgive me for my fortifications of reasons and rationalizations, which keep me more closed than open to your divine direction. Forgive me for my fearful life; I live in horror of your darkness and in terror from your light. Hold me like a baby who cannot move too far, Lord, and love me in my fleeting fantasy of security; love me as I really am. Speak to me from within my heart, Lord, so I may know that I cannot shut you out, or in. In the name of the Risen Christ, I pray. *Amen.*

The Guarded Heart

She joined the church because it was the only Methodist church in town. She always thought of back East as home. This place was just where she happened to be. She attended worship faithfully and became active in Methodist Women. She was punctual, neat, thorough, intelligent, and as friendly as a rattlesnake.

She had the charm of a prickly pear, the wit of a guillotine, the caring of a hermit, and as a result, she didn't like the folks in the town because she thought nobody liked her. It was a most curious situation.

When we got to know her a little, we found a wounded person hiding beneath the cover of the acid tongue. The wounds were deep and had not healed with the passage of time. She could not afford to like people, for fear someone might find her wounded and turn away. So rather than simply hiding from the world, she attacked everyone who came near. Like a plague ship firing warning shots, she tried to drive away the only people who had the medicine to cure her.

For some reason, in the smallness of a rural church, there is a willingness to indulge the unique. There are, of course, certain bounds one does not cross, like being a losing coach or taking liberal political stands. But by and large, people try, just a little more than do urban dwellers, to like one another. With the guarded heart, it required more than a little. But after a time we could see the thorns on her branches begin to fall off.

Once when she was ill, people brought her soup for a week to nurse her back to health. When she hurt her hip, people helped her visit the doctor. When she snapped at them with poisoned-tongue pronouncements, they simply chose not to hear.

She still guards her heart against unknown intruders. But at least she knows that people in the community do care about her. Her barbed comments remain her claim to fame, but they are fewer than before, because no one listens. When she drops a rare compliment, she is showered with acknowledgment.

Somehow, through the patience of the saints in that little town, she found a place in which she could let God roll away the stone and find her tomb empty. It was not a great clap of thunder that proclaimed the miracle; it was the quiet working of a dozen patient people.

How many guarded hearts do you know? How can you become the presence of God in those lives and roll away their stones.

Prayer

O God, who lives beyond the trials of time, who moves mountains, empties oceans, rolls away stones from our hearts, hear us in the midst of our anguish. Too often, we have lost hope in people. We have let our own problems blind our eyes to the problems of others. We have been concerned with the hurts of our own hearts and have not healed the wounds of our friends and neighbors. Use us, O Lord, to roll the stones away to reveal the living God inside. Use us, Lord, to free the guarded hearts of one another. *Amen.*

SUNDAY *The Real Easter*

Matthew 28:1-10	The earthquake. The angel rolls the stone away. Jesus appears and tells the disciples to go to Galilee.
Mark 16:1-8	An angel tells the women to find Peter, but they are afraid and do nothing.
Luke 24:1-43	Two angels appear to the women. The women tell the disciples, but the disciples do not believe.
John 20:1-10	Mary sees the empty tomb and runs to tell Peter. Peter and John run to the tomb and find the linen cloths folded. Mary reenters the tomb and sees two angels. Jesus appears, and she takes him to be the gardener until he speaks.
John 20:19-25	Jesus appears to the disciples in Jerusalem.

As you read the Scriptures this week, notice that they are drastically different. Mark stops abruptly with the words, "And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." (Note that Mark 16:9-20 may not be authentic.) How might Peter have finished this story? Did the disciples go to find the empty tomb, only to discover later that the women had been there earlier? We will never know.

Each evangelist sees the event in a different light. How like the great events of life! When something happens that is totally out of our realm of experience, we are shocked. Our adrenalin flows. Our pulse quickens. Our mind races. Four people will see the same event and all will miss the big picture. Each will remember different details, most of which are true as far as they go, but all are a little skewed, viewed from a different angle and therefore not perfectly accurate.

The disciples, like Paul, might have been stunned by the bigger picture—a blinding light of revelation, too intense to be grasped. Jesus is raised from the grave! Jesus is alive! Jesus is not here! Jesus is with the living! Jesus has conquered death!

It took the disciples years to understand what happened that day. Small wonder it takes us years to apply it to our lives today.

Prayer

O God, who rolled away the stone from the tomb of Jesus, roll away the darkness of ignorance and fear from our lives. Let your gracious warmth and light fill us anew. O Lord Jesus, who steps from the veil of death to save us all, step into our lives and fill us with your holy love. O wondrous Spirit, who comes with blazing tongues of flame on Pentecost, fire us again to feel the deep communion with God and Christ.

On this blessed day of Easter, may I feel the truth of this power all the days of my life. May I be raised, too, this Easter morning! May I be a miracle for Christ! May I be new in him who makes all things new! *Amen.*

You are standing naked on a coral reef in the middle of the ocean as a terrible storm rages about you. Picture it in your mind.

The storm has churned a once calm ocean into maddened-moving mountains, looming out of the darkness to drench you continually with cold saltwater. The clouds have darkened the sky so that you cannot glimpse the light of the sun. You cannot even tell where the sun should be. The coral bites the flesh of your feet, already covered with small wounds. There is no clothing to protect you. It has been this way as long as you can remember. You are cold and sore and beaten. Just being alive is misery. Picture it. Feel it.

Suddenly, without any warning, you are standing on a broad, sandy, sun-baked beach. The sun bathes you in warmth and light. The breeze is gentle, even friendly, as it wraps its warm arms around you. The sand is soft against your feet. The beach is backed by trees laden with fruit. You are as young and healthy as it is possible to be, and you have on just enough clothing to be comfortable. Behind you on the beach are all the friends you ever longed to see, waiting for you to join a party. The tables on the beach are filled with all your favorite foods.

Out of the crowd of loved ones comes Jesus. He walks out to greet you with a wonderfully warm smile. He knows you, and he loves you very much. He holds out his arms and says simply, "It's great to see you. Welcome." You move to him and embrace. He holds you in his arms, and you have never felt so comfortable, so accepted, so loved, so happy to be alive as at this very moment.

This is Easter morning! This is new life in Christ—when you can recognize the old as miserable and isolated; when you can see the new as joyous and loving. When you can embrace, with every fiber of your being, the new life offered to you, then you can enjoy the life that Jesus has been saving for you since time began.

Easter proclaims that truth!

Alleluia!

Prayer

O Lord, how could I have been so foolish for so long? Dear Jesus, accept my apology. I never knew you really cared about me. Risen Lord, take my life and move it within the wondrous love of your life. I renounce all that I have done against your holy name. I embrace all that can be the power of that name. I am yours, Lord. *Amen.*

WALK WITH JESUS: Resources for Holy Week

STEVE PETTY

Are you looking for beautiful, meaningful Easter season devotions? Would you like to bring a memorable new Easter season experience to you and your congregation?

Walk with Jesus is a collection of very special Easter season devotions designed to help you discover the deepest meaning of the Last Supper, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and other critical events of Holy Week. Included in these Holy Week devotions are meditations and prayers for each day. The Maundy Thursday selection includes a complete service for the celebration of "Pesach," or Passover Festival, modified for Christian celebration. This supper may be celebrated as a church, within the family, or in small groups.

STEVE PETTY, a graduate of Iliff School of Theology, is pastor of Holliston United Methodist Church, Pasadena, California.

Abingdon Press

ICN 44005X